

A Companion to Meister Eckhart

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A Companion to Meister Eckhart

Edited by

Jeremiah M. Hackett



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2013

Cover illustration: The Predigerkirche in Erfurt, the Chapter Hall (Kapittelsaal). Photography by Matthias Frank Schmidt, architecture photographer: www.architekturfotograf-schmidt.de.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A companion to Meister Eckhart / edited by Jeremiah M. Hackett.

p. cm. — (Brill's companions to the Christian tradition, 1871–6377 ; v. 36)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-90-04-18347-6 (alk. paper)—ISBN 978-90-04-23692-9 (e-book) 1. Eckhart, Meister, d. 1327. I. Hackett, Jeremiah.

B765.E34C66 2012

230'.2092—dc23

2012033609

This publication has been typeset in the multilingual “Brill” typeface. With over 5,100 characters covering Latin, IPA, Greek, and Cyrillic, this typeface is especially suitable for use in the humanities. For more information, please see www.brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 1871-6377

ISBN 978-90-04-18347-6 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-23692-9 (e-book)

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This book is printed on acid-free paper.

In Memory of
The late Mr Herbert W. Hoefer and Mrs Lilla F. Hoefer of
Columbia, South Carolina, and the late Mr John Madden,
Portmarnock, Dublin, Ireland.

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CONTRIBUTORS

Karl Albert[†] was Professor of Philosophy Emeritus at the University of Wuppertal, Germany. In the course of a long life of teaching and research, he wrote some notable books on the foundations of philosophy and mysticism. His works, however, are not well known in the English-language world. Beginning in the 1950s he wrote on Eckhart's doctrine of Being. One of his final contributions in the years prior to his death was his lecture on Eckhart's intellectual mysticism at the Eckhart Tagung in Erfurt, 2003. It was published in 2005. His works include the following: *Einführung in Die Philosophische Mystik* (Darmstadt: 1996); *Meister Eckhart und die Philosophie des Mittelalters*, (Betrachtungen zur Geschichte der Philosophie) Teil 2 (Dettelbach: 1999) [This work includes a reprint of his 1976 *Meister Eckharts These vom Sein: Untersuchungen zur Metaphysik des Opus Tripartitum* (Saarbrücken: 1976)]; and "Eckharts Intellectuelle Mystik," in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt*, ed. Andreas Speer and Lydia Wegener, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 32 (Berlin: 2005), 231–38.

Alessandra Beccarisi is Associate Professor of the History of Medieval Philosophy at the University of Salento, Lecce, Italy. She is a member of the Italian Society for the Study of Medieval Thought (SISPM), the Société Internationale pour l'Étude de la Philosophie Médiévale (SIEPM), and the Meister-Eckhart-Gesellschaft (MEG). She has received scholarships from the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library and from the Alexander Von Humboldt-Stiftung. She is Editor-in-Chief of Bertram of Ahlen's *Opera omnia*, Ulrich of Strasbourg's *De summo bono* II, 5–6, and Berthold of Moosbourg's *Tabula Contentorum*. Her book, *Meister Eckhart*, is forthcoming from Carocci Publishers in 2012. Her publications include: "Kommentar zur Predigt 77: Ecce mitto angelum meum," in *Lectura Eckhardi III*, ed. Loris Sturlese and Georg Steer, Kohlhammer (Stuttgart: 2009), 93–115; "Der höchste unter den meistern. Eckhart e il De anima di Aristotele," in *Studi sulle fonti di Meister Eckhart*, ed. Loris Sturlese (Fribourg: 2008), 11–38; "Johannes Picardi de Lichtenberg. Un exemple de thomisme dans l'horizon culturelle allemande," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 57 (2010), 286–302; and "Le Corpus Philosophorum Teutonicum Medii Aevi (CPTMA)," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 57 (2010), 425–31.

Nadia Bray is Assistant Professor, History of Medieval Philosophy, at the University of Salento, Lecce, Italy. She has edited the “mystical sermons” from Jordan of Quedlinburg’s Christmas Sermon Cycle and has written important papers on Eckhart and Jordan. Among her works are: *Giordano di Quedlinburg: Opus Jor, Registrum Sermonum, Tabula Contentorum secundum Alphabeti* (Pisa: 2004), and *Jordan Von Quedlinburg, Opus Postillarum et Sermonum de Evangelii dominicalibus (De nativitate Domini), Opus Jor, (Sermones selecti de filiatione divina), (Corpus Philosophorum Teutonicorum Medii Aevi)*, 7, 5 (Hamburg: 2008).

Elizabeth Brient is Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Georgia, Athens. She has published a number of articles on the epochal transition from the Middle Ages to modernity, in particular with reference to late medieval Neoplatonism, the metaphysics of the infinite, and on metaphor, dealing especially with the thought of Meister Eckhart, Nicholas of Cusa, Hans Blumenburg, and Hannah Arendt. She is the author of *The Immanence of the Infinite: Hans Blumenburg and the Threshold of Modernity* (Washington, D.C.: 2002).

Paul A. Dietrich is Professor of Religious Studies and Liberal Studies at the University of Montana, Missoula. He was Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, 1996–98. In 1981 he earned his PhD at the University of Chicago. He has done research and teaching on medieval Neoplatonism, with work on Eriugena, Hildegard of Bingen, Meister Eckhart, Nicholas of Cusa, Hadewich of Brabant, and other thinkers. He is currently working on Dietrich of Freiberg. Among his publications are the following: “Hell and Damnation in Eriugena” (with D.F. Duclow) in *History and Eschatology in John Scottus Eriugena and his Time*, ed. James McEvoy and Michael Dunne (Leuven University Press: 2002); “The Wilderness of God in Hadewijch II and Meister Eckhart and his Circle,” in *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics*, ed. Bernard McGinn (New York: 1994); and (with D.F. Duclow) “Virgins in Paradise: Deification and Eschatology in *Peryphyseon V*,” *Jean Scot Ecrivain* (Montreal-Paris: 1986).

Donald F. Duclow is Professor of Philosophy Emeritus at Gwynnedd-Mercy College. He serves as Secretary of the American Cusanus Society, and represents the Society for Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy (SMRP) on the Council of the Renaissance Society of America. He has published widely on the Christian Neoplatonic tradition in the Middle Ages. His book *Masters of Learned Ignorance: Eriugena, Eckhart, Cusanus* (Ashgate: 2006)

includes 20 of his articles. Among his recent publications are “Eckhart and Nicholas of Cusa: Eucharist and Mystical Transformation,” *Eckhart Reivew* (2008) and “Coinciding in the Margins: Cusanus Glosses on Eriugena,” in *Eriugena-Cusanus*, ed. A. Kijewska, et al. (2011).

Markus Enders (Prof. Dr phil/Dr theol.) holds the Chair in Christian Philosophy of Religion at the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität in Freiburg im Breisgau. He is *Professor Ordinarius* for Christian Philosophy of Religion. He is Editor of the annual *Journal of Philosophy of Religion* and the annual *Journal of Heinrich Seuse*. His numerous publications include: *Das mystische Wissen bei Heinrich Seuse* (1993); *Wahrheit und Notwendigkeit. Die Theorie der Wahrheit bei Anselm von Canterbury* (1999); *Transzendenz und Welt. Das daseinshermeneutische Transzendenz- und Weltverständnis Martin Heideggers auf dem Hintergrund der neuzeitlichen Geschichte des Transzendenz-Begriffs* (1999); (with J. Szaif) *Die Geschichte des philosophischen Begriffs der Wahrheit* (Berlin: 2006); *Gelassenheit und Abgeschiedenheit- Studien zur Deutschen Mystik*, (Boethiana. Forschungsergebnisse zur Philosophie) 82 (Hamburg: 2008). He is also Editor of Bernhard Welte, *Gesammelte Schriften* II/1(2007) and III/2 (2008) (Freiburg: 2007/2008); and (with R. Kühn and C. Bruns), *Im Anfang war der Logos: Studien zur Rezeptionsgeschichte des Johannesprologs* (Freiburg: 2011).

Dagmar Gottschall is Associate Professor of German Philology at the University of Salento, Lecce, Italy. She specializes in Middle High German scientific and religious literature of the 14th century, especially on the translation and adaptation of Latin models in the vernacular. Her recent work includes the analysis of the main MHG work of Konrad von Megenberg: *Konrad von Megenbergs “Buch von den natürlichen Dingen”. Ein Dokument deutschsprachiger Albertus-Magnus-Rezeption im 14. Jahrhundert*, (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters) 83 (Leiden: 2004), and the critical edition of an anonymous vernacular theological treatise: *Das Geistbuch. Ein Traktat zu Vollkommenheit aus dem Umkreis Meister Eckharts*, (Studies in the History of Christian Traditions) 160 (Leiden: 2011).

Jeremiah Hackett is Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy at the University of South Carolina, Columbia, where he was Chair of the Department of Philosophy, 2005–08. He is a member of SIEPM, MEG, Society for the Promotion of Eriugenian Studies (SPES), and SMRP. He has served as Secretary/Treasurer of the Society for Medieval and Renaissance

Philosophy (SMRP), 2004–06. He continues to do research on Roger Bacon and on 14th-century mysticism in Germany. At present, he is working with Thomas S. Maloney on the translation of Roger Bacon's *Moralis philosophia*. He is also translating Pomponazzi's, *De Fato* for the *I Tatti* Series, Harvard University Press. Included among his works dealing with the reception of Meister Eckhart are: "The Use of a Text-Quotation from Meister Eckhart by Jordan of Quedlinburg," in *Proceedings of the Patristic, Mediaeval and Renaissance Conference* (Villanova University), 2 (1977), 97–102; "*Verbum Mentalis* Conceptio in Meister Eckhart and Jordan of Quedlinburg (Saxony), OSA," in *Sprache und Erkenntnis*, (Miscellanea Mediaevalia) 13/2 (Berlin: 1981), 1002–11; "Augustinian Mysticism in Fourteenth-Century Germany: Henry of Freimar and Jordanus of Quedlinburg," in *Augustine: Mystic and Mystagogue*, ed. Joseph Schnaubelt and Frederick Van Fleteren (New York: 1994), 439–56; and "The Reception of Meister Eckhart: Mysticism, Philosophy and Theology in Henry of Freimar (the Elder) and Jordanus of Quedlinburg," in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt*, ed. Andreas Speer and Lydia Wegener, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 32 (Berlin: 2005), 554–86. His other works include: *Medieval Philosophers* (DLB) 115 (1992); editor/author of *Roger Bacon and the Sciences: Commemorative Essays*, (*Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters*) 57 (Leiden: 1997); editor, *Vivarium* (Roger Bacon and Aristotelianism), (September 1997); editor, *Medieval Europe* (814–1350) (London: 2002); and (with Jerald T. Wallulis), *Philosophy of Religion in the 21st Century: Essays in Honor of Professor E. T. Long* (Dordrecht: 2004). His recent work on Roger Bacon includes articles in *The Modern Schoolman*, *Micrologus Library*, the *History of Western Philosophy of Religion*, and *Contradictio* vol. 11: *Herausforderung durch Religion?* (2011).

Jennifer Hart-Weed is Associate Professor of Philosophy, the University of New Brunswick, Canada. Her primary area is medieval philosophy, especially the metaphysics of St Thomas Aquinas. Her published work includes articles on Aquinas, Maimonides, and religious language. A recent publication is "Creation as a Foundation of Analogy in Aquinas," in *Divine Transcendence and Immanence in the Works of Thomas Aquinas* (Leuven: 2009). In 2008 she delivered the Aquinas Lecture at Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

Udo Kern is Professor Dr Emeritus in the Theology Faculty of the University of Rostock. His many publications include the following: *Die Anthropologie des Meister Eckharts* (Hamburg: 1994); *Der andere Feuerbach*.

Sinnlichkeit, Konkretheit und Praxis als Qualität der "neuen Religion" Ludwig Feuerbachs (Münster: 2002); *Liebe als Erkenntnis und Konstruktion von Wirklichkeit "Erinnerung" an ein stets aktuelles Erkenntnisproblem* (Berlin: 2001); *"Gottes Sein ist mein Leben," Philosophische Brocken bei Meister Eckhart* (Berlin: 2003); *Kirche-Amt-Abendmahl. Beiträge aus heutiger lutherischer Sicht* (Münster: 2004); *Was ist und was sein soll. Natur und Freiheit bei Immanuel Kant* (Berlin: 2007); and *Der Gang der Vernunft bei Meister Eckhart* (Berlin, 2012).

Bernard McGinn is the Naomi Shenstone Donnelley Professor Emeritus of Historical Theology and of the History of Christianity, the Divinity School and the Committees on Medieval Studies and General Studies, University of Chicago. He is the premier historian of Western mysticism. To date he has published four volumes of a projected seven-volume study of Western mysticism. These are: *The Foundations of Mysticism* (New York: 1991); *The Growth of Mysticism* (New York: 1994); *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism (1200–1350)* (New York: 1998); and *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany (1300–1500)* (New York: 2005). His 2000–01 Edward Cadbury Lectures, University of Birmingham, remains the standard introduction in English to Eckhart's mysticism: Bernard McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart: The Man From Whom God Hid Nothing* (New York: 2001).

Jack C. Marler is Associate Professor of Philosophy at St Louis University, St Louis, Missouri. He also teaches modern logic and palaeography. A native of Calcasieu Parish in Louisiana, he was educated in the United States and at the University of Toronto, Canada. His fields of interest are Neoplatonism from late antiquity through the Italian Renaissance, and the tradition of commentary on the works of Aristotle and the literature of spirituality in the Christian Middle Ages. He has cooperated with the late Fr Edmund Colledge OSA in publishing original research on Meister Eckhart. With Edmund College OSA and Judith Grant, he translated and annotated *Margret Porete: The Mirror of Simple Souls* (Notre Dame, Ind.: 1999). See also Edmund College and J.C. Marler, "Tractatus magistri Johannes Gerson de mistica theologia: St. Pölten. Diözesanarchiv MS 25," *Mediaeval Studies* 41 (1979), 111–26; " 'Mystical Pictures' in the Suso Exemplar: MS Strasbourg 2929," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 54 (1984), 292–354; and " 'Poverty of the Will': Ruusbroec, Eckhart and *The Mirror of Simple Souls*," in *Jan van Ruusbroec: The Sources, Content and Sequels of his Mysticism*, ed. P. Mommaerts and N. De Paepe (Louvain: 1984), 14–47.

Bruce Milem is Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Philosophy, State University of New York, New Paltz. He is the author of *The Unspoken Word: Negative Theology in Meister Eckhart's German Sermons* (Washington, D.C.: 2002) as well as articles on Meister Eckhart, negative theology, and the philosophy of religion.

Dermot Moran (MRIA) is Professor of Philosophy (metaphysics and logic) at University College Dublin and is a member of the Royal Irish Academy. In 1986 he received his PhD from Yale University. He is the author of: *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena: A Study of Idealism in the Middle Ages* (1989); *Introduction to Phenomenology* (2000); *Edmund Husserl, Founder of Phenomenology* (2005); and *Edmund Husserl and the Crisis of the European Sciences. An Introduction* (2012). He is co-author of *The Husserl Dictionary* (2011), and editor of *The Routledge Companion to Twentieth-Century Philosophy* (2008). He is the founding editor of *The International Journal of Philosophical Studies*.

Cyril O'Regan received his PhD from Yale University in 1989. He taught in the Department of Religious Studies at Yale from 1990 to 1999. Since then, he has taught at the University of Notre Dame, where he teaches courses in systematic and historical theology and philosophy of religion. His current title is Huisking Chair of Theology. He is the author of *The Heterodox Hegel* (SUNY: 1994); *Gnostic Return in Modernity* (SUNY: 2001); *Gnostic Apocalypse: Jacob Boheme's Haunted Narrative* (SUNY: 2002); *Theology and the Spaces of Apocalyptic* (Marquette University Press: 2009); and *The Anatomy of Misremembering: Balthasar and the Specter of Hegel* (Crossroad: 2012).

Alessandro Palazzo is Assistant Professor of Medieval Philosophy, University of Trent, Italy. His latest publications include: "‘*Plato dicit quod formae dantur secundum merita materiae*’: la fortuna di una sentenza platonica nelle opere di Meister Eckhart," in *L'Antichità classica nel pensiero médiévale*, ed. A. Palazzo, Textes et Études du Moyen Âge 61, 341–72; "Albert the Great's Doctrine of Fate," in *Mantik, Schicksal und Freiheit im Mittelalter*, ed. Loris Sturlese, Beihefte zum Archiv für Kulturgeschichte 70 (Köln: 2011), 65–95; "Philosophy and Theology in the German Dominican *scholae* in the Late Middle Ages: the cases of Ulrich of Strasbourg and Berthold of Wimpfen," in *Philosophy and Theology in the Studia of the Religious Orders and at Papal and Royal Courts*, ed. K. Emery Jr, W.J. Courtenay, and S.M. Metzger, *Rencontres de philosophie médiévale* 15, 75–105.

Fiorella Retucci is Research Assistant at the Thomas-Institut, University of Cologne. She cooperated with Loris Sturlese in the publication of three volumes of the *Corpus Philosophorum Teutonicorum Medii Aevi* (Berthold of Moosburg, 2007, 2011; Ulrich of Strasburg, 2008). She is currently at work on the research project directed by Andreas Speer concerning the Sentence Commentary of Durandus of Saint-Pourçain. The first volume (Book 2, Dist. 1–5) has just been published (Leuven: 2012). She is also working on the early Franciscan school at Oxford, in particular, Thomas of York.

Elisa Rubino holds a PhD from the universities of Cologne and Lecce. She has edited Henricus Aristippus' Greek–Latin translation of Aristotle's *Meteorologica* in *Aristoteles Latinus* (Turnhout: 2010). She is collaborating with Loris Sturlese in the critical edition of the works of Meister Eckhart. Her edition of the *Basle Compendium Operis tripartite* is forthcoming from Kohlhammer in 2012.

Yossef Schwartz is Professor of Scholastic Thought at the Cohn Institute of the History of Philosophy of Science and Ideas, Tel Aviv University, Israel. He earned his PhD at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, in 1996. He has done much work on the impact of Jewish thought on the Latin Middle Ages and on the transition from the Middle Ages to modernity. Listed among his works are: *From Cloister to University: Between Theology and Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Tel Aviv: 1999; in Hebrew); “*Causa materialis*: Solomon ben Maimon and the Possibility of Philosophical Transmission,” in *Solomon Maimon: Rational Dogmatism and Empirical Skepticism*, ed. G. Freudenthal (Dordrecht: 2003), 125–43; “Die Seelenlehre des Hillel aus Verona: Aristotelische Psychologie zwischen Maimonides und Thomismus,” in *Knowledge and Science: Problems of Epistemology in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. M. Lutz-Bachmann, A. Fidora and P. Antolic (Berlin: 2004), 253–64; “Meister Eckharts Schriftauslegung als Maimonidisches Projekt,” in *Moses Maimonides (1138–1204)—His Religious, Scientific, and Philosophical Wirkungsgeschichte in Different Cultural Contexts*, ed. Gorge K. Hasselhoff et al. (Würzburg: 2004), 173–208; edited (with V. Krech), *Religious Apologetics-Philosophical Argument* (Tübingen: 2004); “Zwischen Einheitsmetaphysik und Einheitshermeneutik: Eckharts Maimonides Lektüre und das Datierungsproblem des ‘Opus tripartitum’,” in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt*, ed. Andreas Speer and Lydia Wegener (Berlin: 2005), 259–79; and “Ernst Cassirer on Cusanus: Between Conjectural Knowledge

and Religious Pluralism,” in *Ernst Cassirer: Symbol, Science and Culture*, ed. J. Barash (Chicago: 2008), 129–46.

Fr Walter Senner OP is Professor at the Pontifical St Thomas Aquinas University, Rome (Angelicum), and is President of the St Thomas Aquinas Institute. His specializations are: Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, and Meister Eckhart. He holds a PhD from the Catholic University of Louvain. He is coordinator of the “Deutsche Thomas Ausgabe” (Latin–German commented edition of the *Summa theologiae*) and of *Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordrs*. His publications include: *Johannes von Sterngassen OP und sein Sentenzenkommentar*, 2 vols, (*Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens*) NS 4 and 5 (Berlin: 1995); *Blühende Gelehrsamkeit: Die Kölner Dominikanerschule, Köln*, 1998; *Alberts des Großen Verständnis von Theologie und Philosophie*, (Lectio Albertina) 9 (Münster: 2009); and the Latin–German edition of Meister Eckhart’s *Parisian Questions* (including newly discovered questions) (forthcoming in 2012).

Loris Sturlese is Professor of the History of Medieval Philosophy at the University of Salento, and Director of the Scuola Superiore (ISUFI) (Institute of Advanced Studies), Lecce, Italy. He is Editor-in-Chief of the *Corpus Philosophorum Teutonicorum Medii Aevi* (32 volumes) (Hamburg: Felix Meiner), and Editor of Meister Eckhart’s *Latin Works* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer). He is the author in German and Italian of *A History of German Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Italian edition, 2 vols; Florence: Olschki, 1990, 1996; and German edition, Munich: Beck, 1993). He is author of *Homo Divinus. Philosophische Projekte in Deutschland zwischen Meister Eckhart und Heinrich Seuse* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2007) (the revised Italian edition has been published in Florence: Le Lettere, 2010).

Tamar Tsopurashvili received her PhD at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum in 1978. She is currently Associate Professor and Director of the Institute for Philosophy at the Ilia State University, Tbilisi, Georgia. Included among her publications are: *Sprache und Metaphysik. Meister Eckharts Prädikationstheorie und ihre Auswirkung auf sein Denken*, (Bochumer Studien zur Philosophie) 52 (Amsterdam: 2011); and “Die Idee der Freiheit bei F.W. J. Schelling,” in *Die Idee der Freiheit in Philosophie und Sozialtheorie*, ed. B. Mojsisch and M. Beriashvili (Saarbrücken: 2010), 143–54. Her interests are in medieval philosophy, Meister Eckhart’s influence on later medieval philosophy, and the philosophy of language.

Andrew Weeks is Professor of German at Illinois State University, Normal, Ill. He holds a PhD in comparative literature from the University of Illinois and has an interest in the social and literary history of mystical or dissenting writings. He has published volumes of intellectual biographies of Jacob Boehme, Paracelsus, Valentin Weigel, a literary history of German mysticism, and translations of Weigel and Paracelsus. He is at work on a translation of Boehme's *Aurora* and a collection of pieces on the literature of the late 16th century called *The Faustian Century*.

Lydia Wegener is Research Fellow at the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften in Berlin. She studied German philology, English philology, and philosophy at the University of Cologne where she received her PhD in 2009. Her research areas are medieval courtly literature, Rhineland mysticism, and Reformation literature. Her publications include: "Augustinus-Rezeption in der Reformation-Der Straßburger Münsterprediger Caspar Hedio als Übersetzer augustinischer Schriften in der ersten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts," in *Questio* 6 (2006), 277–305; "Freiheitsdiskurs und Beginenverfolgung um 1308—Der Fall der Marguerite Porete," in 1308. *Eine Topographie historischer Gleichzeitigkeit*, ed. Andreas Speer and David Wirmer, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 35 (Berlin: 2010), 199–236; "Dâ daz ouge die varwe sol behennen, dâ muoz ez von aller varwe gescheiden sîn—Methoden der Wahrnehmungenintensivierung in Texten der 'Deutschen Mystik'," in *Farbe im Mittelalter. Materialität-Medialität-Semantik*, vol. 2, ed. Ingrid Bennewitz and Andrea Schindler (Berlin: 2001), 803–16; and *Der Frankfurter/Theologia deutsch. Spielräume und Grenzen des Sagbaren* (forthcoming, 2012).

PREFACE

It is now almost 200 years since the modern rediscovery of Meister Eckhart (c.1250–1327). Eckhart scholarship from 1830 to 1970 has seen major discoveries, editions, and critical studies. Beginning in the 1970s, there has been a renewed concern with Eckhart as a *Lesemeister* and *Lebemeister*. Eckhart's works have been re-edited and unedited works have been critically edited and studied. Significant new monographs have been produced. Many themes from Eckhart have received scientific study and some general works of interpretation have been completed.¹

The present volume is designed as a handbook on Eckhart, the first such work in English. It presents a critical review of *some* of the main philosophical and theological research on Eckhart from European and American scholarship for the period 1970–2011. The volume does not have as its goal the formal treatment of Eckhart as a “mystic”. As a result, some pertinent discussion of this topic in French-language research is not covered. Brief reference to the topic of mysticism is made here in this Preface. In the Epilogue, the issue of the modern German debate on Eckhart's mysticism is addressed by one of the participants. Hence, much of the relevant literature on the “mysticism” of Eckhart is not discussed.² The issue of Eckhart as a “mystic” is undoubtedly one about which we have

¹ See Kurt Flasch, *Meister Eckhart: Philosoph des Christentums* (Munich: 2010); Flasch, *Meister Eckhart: Die Geburt der “Deutschen Mystik” aus dem Geist der arabischen Philosophie* (Munich: 2006); Norbert Winkler, *Meister Eckhart. Zur Einführung* (Hamburg: 1997); and Kurt Ruh, *Meister Eckhart: Theologe, Prediger, Mystiker* (Munich: 1985). In English, see Bernard McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart: The Man From Whom God Hid Nothing* (New York: 2001); Frank Tobin, *Meister Eckhart: Thought and Language* (Philadelphia: 1986); and Oliver Davies, *Meister Eckhart: Mystical Theologian* (London: 1991). See Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: 1995) for the background context on Eckhart's mysticism, as well as Robert J. Dobie, *Logos and Revelation: Ibn ‘Arabi, Meister Eckhart and Mystical Hermeneutics* (Washington, D.C.: 2010). For French scholarship on Eckhart, see Alain de Libera, *La mystique rhénane d’Albert le Grand à Maître Eckhart* (Paris: 1994) and the related works by de Libera, Emilie Zum Brunn, and E.H. Weber listed in the bibliography.

² This topic has been explicitly addressed in the major studies by Alois Haas, Bernard McGinn, and Kurt Ruh, among others (see bibliography). The most recent critical study on this theme is the careful account of the Patristic background to Eckhart's mysticism in Theo Kobusch, “Mystic als Metaphysik des Inneren,” in *Meister Eckhart und Augustinus*, ed. Rudolf Kilian Weigand and Regina D. Schiewer, *Meister-Eckhart-Jahrbuch* 3 (Stuttgart: 2011), 17–36.

not heard the last word. It is a very difficult topic and it needs separate treatment.

This volume is divided into three parts and each part has a separate introduction. In the introduction to the first part, Professor Bernard McGinn places the volume in the context of modern Eckhart research and introduces the individual chapters of Part One. The first part of the volume includes a critical review of the evidence for Eckhart's life and work, complete lists of the critically edited Latin works, a critical review of the status of the German works, an account of early Eckhart as a preacher and administrator, an account of some of his central philosophical and theological ideas, and reviews of Eckhart's Greek, Arabic, and Jewish sources. Part Two is introduced by Professor Paul Dietrich. It deals with Eckhart as a Latin exegete, preacher in the vernacular, Eckhart's concept of God, the major influence of Moses Maimonides on the later Eckhart, and Eckhart's relation to the world of women's spirituality. The third part is introduced by the editor, Jeremiah Hackett. It provides an account of the reception of Eckhart by his immediate contemporaries in Germany, the appropriation of Eckhart's work by the 15th-century thinker Nicholas of Cusa, and by the 16th-century Lutheran pastor, Valentin Weigel. Comprehensive reviews of the reception of Eckhart in the age of German idealism and in 20th-century philosophy are presented by experts in the fields of modern theology and philosophy. The Epilogue to the volume introduces the English-language reader to some modern issues concerning Eckhart's "mysticism". It is polemical in nature but it gives the English-language reader some sense from within the German debate on the nature of Eckhart's "mysticism". This is followed by Appendix 1, in which Professor Fr Walter Senner, OP, provides an overview of the structure of the Dominican education to which Eckhart was greatly indebted. This places the later life and work of Eckhart in the context of his earliest educational training.

The central question that has arisen in modern German research on Eckhart is "Wer ist Meister Eckhart?" ("Who is Meister Eckhart?"). In the early 20th century, the assumption was that Eckhart should be seen as a much-respected preacher in German and Latin, and as a Latin commentator on Scripture who had been trained philosophically at Erfurt, Cologne, and at the University of Paris. It was also held that he resided and preached at Strasbourg in the period 1314–25. It has been a commonplace of the scholarship that Meister Eckhart was one of the great mystics in Western Christianity. Much work has been done on Eckhart as a mystic. And yet in the period 1960–2011, a great debate arose in Germany as to whether or not Eckhart should in fact be called a mystic.

The one-time editor of Eckhart's Latin works, Heribert Fischer, argued in the 1960s that Eckhart was a medieval theologian.³ He claimed that he was not a mystic. The philosopher Karl Albert had already argued that Eckhart needed to be placed in the tradition of philosophical mysticism that began with Parmenides and that was redeveloped in Plato, Plotinus, Porphyry, Proclus, and other Neoplatonic thinkers.⁴ A strong reaction to the use of the term "mysticism" with respect to Eckhart came from the so-called "Bochum school" of medieval philosophy, and especially from the pen of Kurt Flasch. He wrote about the need to free Meister Eckhart from the "Mystical flood".⁵ In part, it can be seen that Flasch is writing against the background of modern New Age mysticism and all forms of emotional subjective mysticism. He spoke of the need to situate Eckhart in his own context—namely, that of a school trained philosophical theologian. Above all, Eckhart was to be seen as an original philosophical thinker who formulated his own philosophical-theological synthesis and who held that "the reasons of natural philosophy" were of great importance for understanding the text of the world and for written texts, especially the text of Sacred Scripture. Eckhart's synthesis owed much to the Albertinian Neoplatonic tradition and other medieval Neoplatonic thinkers such as Bonaventure (c.1217–74), Thomas Aquinas (1225–74), and Henry of Ghent (1217–93). It can be claimed that he worked most closely with his confrère, Dietrich of Freiberg (c.1250–1310). While Eckhart was a keen reader and respector of the work of both Thomas Aquinas and Dietrich of Freiberg, he did not feel bound to the task of verbatim repetition of their text and doctrine. Where appropriate, he offered an overcoming (*aufhebung*) of the work of Aquinas and Dietrich. It was the originality of Eckhart as a thinker that enabled him to draw creatively on the riches of the philosophical-theological past as he projected new questions and new answers. And it is precisely as a *speculative thinker* that Eckhart stands out among his contemporaries. Or, in the light of the major influence of Moses Maimonides on the hermeneutics of the later Eckhart, one could claim that he is an original hermeneutical thinker in the Latin tradition, one who transcends the traditional methodology. In this respect at least,

³ Heribert Fischer, "Zur Frage nach der Mystik in den Werken Meister Eckharts," in *La mystique rhénane* (Paris: 1963), 109–32. See also Fischer, *Meister Eckhart: Einführung in sein philosophisches Denken* (Munich: 1974).

⁴ Karl Albert: see the Epilogue to the present volume and the select bibliography.

⁵ Kurt Flasch, "Meister Eckhart: Versuch, ihn aus dem mystischen Strom zu retten," in *Gnosis und Mystik in der Geschichte der Philosophie*, ed. Peter Koslowski (Zurich: 1988), 94–110. See also the items in note 1 above.

I believe that Karl Albert and Kurt Flasch are both correct: there can be no adequate interpretation of Eckhart without taking him seriously as a philosopher and especially one interested in natural philosophy and its application in theology. Further, Eckhart's thinking cannot be separated from his own social *Sitz im Leben* and his radical answers to the issues of his own times in the context of the new urban environment, and the new urban centers of learning; namely, the universities and the houses of study of the religious orders. That concern, however, does not make him a modern Marxist.

Further, those who would judge Eckhart as a kind of representative of a philosophy based on New Age mysticism completely miss the hard work of thinking from within the Western philosophical tradition that is central to Eckhart's work.⁶ And those who compare Eckhart with Eastern mysticism need also to bear this in mind.

My own preference is to see Eckhart as a scholastically trained rigorous thinker who was both a philosopher and a theologian. Was he a mystic? It all depends, of course, on what one means by that term "mystic". Pauline mysticism is a quite distinct experience from the philosophical mysticism of the *Platonici*. Yet in a figure such as Augustine one finds a synthesis of Paul with the *Platonici*, that is, with the teaching of Plotinus and Porphyry and late ancient Latin writers who were influenced by Neoplatonism.⁷ Further, the presence of Augustine in Eckhart ought not be neglected.⁸ And here is the problem: Eckhart was a very profound reader of Augustine, Boethius, Eriugena, Anselm, and the School of Chartres. Thus, there is a significant Latin Neoplatonic influence on Eckhart, as there is a significant Greek Neoplatonic influence through Proclus, Pseudo-Dionysius, and Eriugena, the Greek fathers, the School of Chartres, and the Islamic and Jewish traditions. At the same time, he had a strong grasp of the new 13th-century Aristotelianism as mediated by Arabic and Jewish Aristotelianism.

⁶ For Eckhart, the Western philosophical tradition includes the *whole* Western tradition—Greek, Hebrew, Islamic, and Latin. For him, there is a recognizable history of the development and universality of truth present in all of these traditions.

⁷ For a study of the uniting of Pauline and Platonic mysticism in Eckhart's immediate contemporaries at Erfurt, Henry of Freimar (the Elder) and Jordan of Quedlinburg, see Jeremiah Hackett, "Augustinian Mysticism in Fourteenth-Century Germany: Henry of Freimar and Jordanus of Quedlinburg," in *Augustine: Mystic and Mystagogue*, ed. Joseph Schnaubelt and Fredrick Van Fleteren, *Collectanea Augustiniana* 3 (New York: 1994), 439–56.

⁸ See Andreas Speer, "Weisheit bei Augustinus und Meister Eckhart," in Weigand and Schiewer, *Meister Eckhart und Augustinus*, 1–16.

Further, as will be seen in the present volume, we can now see that Eckhart was profoundly influenced by the major Jewish thinker, Moses Maimonides. The latter was many things, including teacher, doctor, lawyer, philosopher, Jewish theologian, and source of Jewish mysticism. This very deep influence on Meister Eckhart of Moses Maimonides, which has been known for some time, has received new study in recent times. It is also the case that he was greatly influenced by Solomon Ibn Gabirol (Avicebron) and by the two great Islamic thinkers, Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Ibn Rushd (Averroes).

Naturally, much of the modern discussion of mysticism is affected by 19th-century philosophical attempts to interpret the various traditions of Western and Eastern mysticism. Early 19th-century discussions in the context of rationalism led to the classification of mysticism as "irrational". One must acknowledge also that 20th-century German and American discussions of this problem have the work of Rudolf Otto and also perhaps William James in mind. Further, one must also be aware that the medieval tradition of the relation of mysticism and metaphysics is quite distinct and different from what is found in modernity. A failure to recognize this could lead to a gross confusion, and hence to a deformation of a thinker like Meister Eckhart. Mysticism and metaphysics in the Middle Ages had a correlative relationship. They cannot be contrasted, as is done by some modern thinkers, as an opposition between "rationality" and "irrationality".

The issue of mysticism has become very important in the context of inter-religious dialogue in the late 20th and early 21st century. Monotheistic religions such as the three religions of the book, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, exhibit significant mystical traditions. So too does the world of Greek and Latin philosophy. Indeed, there are elements of Indian tradition, as for example in Shankara, where one can recognize analogies with the thought of Meister Eckhart. This also arises in reference to Zen Buddhism. This reality points to the need for a very careful comparative study of the phenomenon of mysticism as found in Eckhart and in other major philosophical and religious traditions. The phenomenon of mysticism cannot be gotten around simply by claiming that Eckhart is not a mystic in the subjectivist, magical, New Age sense. And it cannot be dismissed as though it is some kind of "irrationality". It must be confronted in the context of Eckhart's own times and in the context of the various traditions that find a synthesis in Eckhart's great works.

Eckhart was a creative philosopher, a thoroughly rational theologian, and the propagator of a way of life intended to lead to close union of the human being with the Godhead. He was also a very down-to-earth person

who was very successful as an administrator. His ending was tragic and unfortunate, as he became a victim of organizational politics and ideological calumny. Yet, grounded in faith and natural philosophy, he bore his fate with a courageous thought-filled response to his inquisitors. Like his earlier philosophical-theological contemporaries at the University of Paris, Thomas Aquinas and Giles of Rome, and like his model, Albert the Great, Eckhart suffered the opprobrium of theological inquisitors who did not appreciate the comprehensive scope of this new “scientific” theology or his distinctive “vernacularization” of Greek and Latin theology. They did not altogether understand his specific thought-forms, careful distinctions, and utter dedication to his life’s vocation. Even his contemporary, William of Ockham, while at Avignon, fell for the simplistic stereotyping of Eckhart’s distinctive philosophical terminology then fashionable among those who were educated. Of course, here one is confronted by the mediation of philosophy and theology in the very different institutionalized languages of distinct forms of interpretation, or distinct *traditions*, as Alasdair McIntyre would put it. This context of post-1277 and the “*correctoria*” controversies led to much mutual misunderstanding. Indeed, already by 1266, Roger Bacon, Ockham’s predecessor, was in full outcry against Albert (“he who made himself an authority” at Paris) and his great student, Aquinas.⁹

Was Meister Eckhart set up to be destroyed by morally compromised persons within his own Dominican order? The answer has to be yes. Was he personally a heretic? No, he was not by a long shot, and this was recognized even by the Avignon Inquisition, and has been acknowledged in modern times.¹⁰ Why then were 28 sentences from Meister Eckhart condemned? Perhaps the best answer to this problem has been suggested by Alain de Libera. He was condemned because church authorities saw his very complex and rich rhetoric and poetic as a source of theological confu-

⁹ Jeremiah Hackett, “The Attitude of Roger Bacon to the *Scientia* of Albertus Magnus,” in *Albertus Magnus and the Sciences: Commemorative Essays 1980*, ed. James A. Weisheipl OP (Toronto: 1980), 53–72.

¹⁰ See the thesis of Dom David Knowles: “of his radical traditionalism and orthodoxy there is no longer any doubt”. See D.A. Knowles, “Denifle and Ehrle,” *History* 54 (1969), 4. This conclusion of Dom David Knowles can be compared with the more recent judgement by the learned scholar of medieval mysticism, Edmund Colledge, OSA. See Colledge, “Historical Data,” in *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, ed. Edmund Colledge, OSA, and Bernard McGinn (Mahwah, N.J.: 1981), 3–23. Fr Colledge regards Eckhart’s teaching as open to the charge of heresy, if it is not, in fact, at least in part, heretical.

sion for the “faithful”.¹¹ But one might ask: who are the faithful? Of course, the term includes all Christian believers. Yet, are not those who have been trained to think theologically members of the “faithful”? Certainly, Eckhart’s own Dominican brothers and sisters and their lay auditors who were philosophically and theologically literate were able to interpret his teaching and preaching. They especially were the audience for Eckhart’s more philosophically nuanced preaching. However, there were other Dominicans who believed that any deviation from the *ipsissima verba* of Thomas Aquinas was theologically and philosophically suspect, notwithstanding the fact that “the things themselves” were what mattered for Aquinas. Ultimately, the political struggle between the papal monarchy and the monarchy of Emperor Louis of Bavaria provided the context in which the archbishop of Cologne demanded obedience from the Cologne Dominicans on behalf of the papal cause. This alone, however, was a necessary but not a sufficient background factor. The Clementine decrees of the Council of Vienne in 1311 had already targeted the phenomenon of lay spirituality in the Rhineland, especially the “Free Spirit” movement. Eckhart was not the first person to be brought before the Cologne diocesan Inquisition.

It is my belief that modern study of both Aquinas and Eckhart will make explicit great commonality and also some significant difference between both thinkers. Indeed, modern scholars such as Alain de Libera have already pointed to the continued impact of the Parisian condemnations of 1270 and 1277 on the condemnation of Eckhart. Who was condemned in the trial of the Cologne Inquisition and in the papal bull *In agro dominico*? Was it Meister Eckhart alone or was it Eckhart, Aquinas, Dietrich of Freiberg, Nicholas of Strasbourg, and the whole Albertine Dominican tradition? The influence of the condemnations at Paris of 1277 was still a major factor, and the “orthodox” status of Aquinas, certainly in the eyes of the neo-Augustinian Franciscans, had not been accepted, notwithstanding the new acceptance of the orthodoxy of Aquinas at the papal court in Avignon.

It is more than significant that Eckhart was rediscovered in the post-Kantian tradition of modern German idealism.¹² This central tradition in modern philosophy led to the integration of Eckhart into modern philosophy

¹¹ Alain de Libera, “On Some Philosophical Aspects of Meister Eckhart’s Teaching,” *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 45 (1998), 150–68.

¹² See the chapters by Cyril O’Regan and Dermot Moran in the present volume.

and to the development of modern Eckhart scholarship, especially of the German works of Eckhart. The rediscovery of the Latin works of Eckhart by Heinrich S. Denifle, OP, led to the modern critical scholarship of the Latin works. The renewed critical study of Eckhart in the post–World War II context has allowed scholars to debunk some of the earlier myths of Eckhart scholarship. Certainly, the new work on Eckhart has opened up a veritable treasure chest. Until recently, the accident of rediscovery led to a bifurcated Eckhart, the “Protestant” Eckhart, as it were, of the German sermons and treatises, and the “Catholic” Eckhart of the Latin works. The very fact that material from Eckhart’s Latin works was used by the Cologne and Avignon inquisitors is enough to indicate the artificiality of this distinction. There was one Eckhart and he expressed his teaching in the philosophically rich technical Latin of the schools, and in his own rich expression of his teaching in Middle High German.

The modern interest in Eckhart has come to be “popular”. This is not a bad thing. It means that people of all kinds of interest find a resonance in the work of Eckhart. Why should Eckhart be limited to the very intense and focused world of the scholars? Why should Eckhart’s thoughts not be communicated to the wider world? As will be evident from Part Three of the present volume, this popularization had already begun in Eckhart’s own times. It first began in the 14th century when Eckhart’s followers, both male and female, made a concerted effort to shield his works from the excesses of inquisitorial book censorship. It happened first of all among his own Cologne and Erfurt Dominicans, but it also took place in a modified manner in the case of leading scholars among the German Franciscans and Augustinians.¹³ Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the new Eckhart research is the discovery of the rich manuscript artwork based on Eckhart preserved by the Dominican sisters in St Katharinental.

Just as there are as many “Middle Ages” as there are interpreters of the Middle Ages, so too there are as many “Meister Eckharts” as there are interpreters of Meister Eckhart. It was ever thus and it will ever be so in the future.

The aim of the present volume is to open up the world of Eckhart research (c.1970s to the present time) to undergraduate and graduate students in the English-language world. It is a work in the service of scholar-

¹³ See Nadia Bray’s chapter in the present volume. Marquard of Lindau, Jordan of Quedlinburg, and John Hiltalingen of Basel are representative. So, too, is Prosper of Reggio Emilia, who preserved reports of Eckhart’s Parisian lectures.

ship. The ultimate aim is to read and understand the works of Meister Eckhart. The work of scholarship is a necessary task in the realization of that ultimate goal. Was Meister Eckhart a “mystic”, a theologian, a philosopher, a communicator, poet, administrator, or faithful Dominican? Why do his works have a resonance among very diverse peoples and traditions? Whatever the answer to these questions, it is clear that the study of Meister Eckhart has exhibited great creativity and development in the period 1970–2011.

Many thanks are due to the editors of the works of Meister Eckhart, especially to Loris Sturlese and his colleagues in the study group at Lecce on Eckhart and Jordan of Quedlinburg. They provided the context for my return in 2002 to the study of Meister Eckhart, Henry of Freimar, and Jordan of Quedlinburg. Acknowledgement is also due to the Thomas-Institute at Cologne under the direction of Professor Jan Aertsen and Professor Andreas Speer. I am grateful for their hospitality. At an earlier stage, I was encouraged in this work by some fine teachers in Dublin and Toronto. They include Gabriel C. Daly, the late Denis Mason, Michael Richter, Patrick Masterson (philosophy of religion), Denys Turner (ethics), and the late F.X. Martin, Michael Bertram Crowe, Conor Martin, Edmund Colledge, Ludwig Bieler, Virginia Brown, and Armand A. Maurer. I learned much about Eckhart as a philosopher from Armand A. Maurer. He encouraged my interest in Eckhart. An important social impetus towards the study of Meister Eckhart in Dublin in 1973 came from fellow students Mr John Doyle, MA, Dr Cyril O'Regan, Mr William O. Shorten, MA, and Dr Josephine Russell. A word of thanks is also due to the Goethe-Institute Library in Dublin.

Acknowledgement is due to the support given by the Interlibrary Loan section of the Thomas Cooper Library, University of South Carolina, and to Dean Thomas McNally and his colleagues. This kind of research could not be done without their great assistance. Thanks are due to Anne Bezuidenhout, Chair, Department of Philosophy, and to all my colleagues, and also to Stephanie Mitchem, Chair, Department of Religious Studies, and to all her colleagues. Both chairpersons facilitated an interdepartmental course on Meister Eckhart in spring 2010. Professor Heike Sefrin-Weis (philosophy and classics) was most helpful with one difficult chapter. I thank her for her general encouragement of the project. Dean Mary Anne Fitzpatrick, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and Provost Michael Amirides helped this work to completion by the award of sabbatical leave. I am grateful for this award during difficult times in academia.

I am especially thankful to my wife Lilla Hoefer. She has been a very great supporter of the work of the university and of scholarship. She has been especially supportive of my work on this Eckhart project.

For editorial assistance with this work, I wish to thank Katherine Macedon. Thanks are also due to the following graduate and undergraduate students in philosophy and religious studies at the University of South Carolina: Craig E. Bacon, Caleb Colley, Brian Mesimer, and Michelle Panchuk. Their help with reviewing and with the indices was invaluable. They are skilled and dedicated students of ancient, medieval, and modern philosophy. I also thank Mr Richard Layman, director at Layman Poupard Publishing, for some very helpful advice at a crucial stage in the edition.

Thanks are also due to the editors at Brill Publishers for the invitation to edit this first handbook on Eckhart in English and to the translators chosen by Brill Publishers, namely, Brian McNeil and Ada Bronowski.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this book to three people of remarkable virtue and dedication, my parents-in-law, the late Mr Herbert W. Hoefer and Mrs Lilla F. Hoefer of Columbia, South Carolina, and the late Mr John Madden, Portmarnock, Dublin, Ireland. All three gave essential witness in practice to the philosophical and theological vision that Eckhart proclaimed.

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION TO PART ONE:
A COMPANION TO MEISTER ECKHART

Bernard McGinn

The year 1937 saw the publication of the first volume of the great critical edition of the writings of Meister Eckhart: *Meister Eckhart. Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke. Herausgegeben im Auftrag der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft*. Over the following period of more than seven decades, interest in Eckhart has never vanished, though it has had its ups and downs, perhaps due more to historical crises like World War II than to shifts in scholarship. Recent decades have seen the appearance of two international societies dedicated to the study and dissemination of Eckhart: the Eckhart Society centered in England was founded in 1987 by the late Ursula Fleming, and the Meister-Eckhart-Gesellschaft located in Germany was founded in 2004 by Georg Steer and his associates. Both groups sponsor conferences, publish journals devoted to Eckhart, and (given the new situation in scholarship) have presences on the Web. The work of these societies, and, even more, the increasing flood of scholarship on Eckhart, are ample indications that fascination with the German Dominican is a growing phenomenon today and for the foreseeable future.

In light of this increasing interest, and especially now that the critical edition is nearing completion, it is time to take stock of what we know about Eckhart and to present the main strands of current scholarship on a figure who was a philosopher as well as a theologian, a mystic as well as a preacher, and an administrator as well as an academic. Hence the timeliness of the appearance of *A Companion to Meister Eckhart*, ably edited by Jeremiah Hackett in Brill's series, *Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition*.

There are many Eckharts and a large literature has been devoted to this author who is as difficult as he is influential. Perhaps no single volume can hope to do justice to the whole of Eckhart. What Professor Hackett and his international team of noted Eckhart scholars have done is to give an expansive treatment of Eckhart the philosopher, though also touching on other important aspects of the Dominican's accomplishments, such as his biblical exegesis, preaching, and relation to women's spirituality. The major areas of concentration, therefore, are on the philosophical influences on

Eckhart, especially from Jewish and Arabic sources; treatments of many, though by no means all, of the main themes of his thought (God, transcendentials, analogy, anthropology, etc.); and studies of his influence both in the medieval and the modern periods.

Part One concentrates on introducing Eckhart's life and providing surveys of his Latin and German writings. It also includes treatments of some of Eckhart's sources, as well as considerations of important aspects of his thought.

In a long essay, Walter Senner, OP, who has already made many contributions to our knowledge of Eckhart and the German Dominicans of the 13th and 14th centuries, summarizes his long engagement with Eckhart in a detailed essay on "Eckhart's Life, Training, Career, and Trial." Father Senner has the advantage not only of his own unrivalled knowledge of the German Dominicans, but also the appearance of the critical edition of all the sources relating to Eckhart's life in the *Acta Eckhardiana*, edited by Loris Sturlese and appearing in LW V between 1988 and 2006. Senner's account provides the benchmark for all subsequent treatments of Eckhart's life and times. What is perhaps most remarkable about the essay is its judicious caution about how little we know for sure about Eckhart's life on the basis of precisely dated sources. Senner's clarifications of: (1) what is certain about Eckhart's life, (2) what is likely, and (3) what is mere supposition, will form a necessary bedrock for subsequent research on the medieval preacher. Also dealing in part with Eckhart's life, but concentrating on his career as a Parisian academic and an administrator in the German provinces of the Dominican order, is Loris Sturlese's essay, "Eckhart as Preacher, Administrator, and Master of the Sentences: From Erfurt to Paris and Back, 1294–1313. The Origins of the *Opus tripartitum*." This penetrating essay presents a convincing account of Eckhart's success as an administrator and the failure of his original philosophical and theological views to have much effect on the Parisian academic world. Sturlese argues that the genesis for much of Eckhart's most profound teaching, as well as the beginnings of the unfinished *Opus tripartitum*, go back to the Dominican's first period as teaching master (*magister actu regens*) in Paris between 1302 and 1303.

A major task of a volume such as this *Companion to Meister Eckhart* is to provide readers with a solid and up-to-date analysis of the subject's major writings. Hence the central role of the two important essays that follow in Part One by Alessandra Beccarisi, "Eckhart's Latin Works," and Dagmar Gottschall, "Eckhart's German Works." Professor Beccarisi's entry gives a brilliant and often new analysis of the evolution of Eckhart's aca-

demic works, tracing major developments in and between the two Paris teaching periods. Particularly important is her discussion of the differences between the first and the second commentaries on Genesis. Professor Gottschall takes up the complicated question of Eckhart's vernacular works, both the sermons and the treatises. Gottschall discusses the different criteria employed for determining authenticity in the various projects for editing Eckhart, as well as the form of Eckhart's texts. She also gives a detailed account of each of the vernacular works, including some select sermons. On the authenticity of the controversial treatise *Von Abgeschiedenheit*, Gottschall maintains a prudent middle-of-the-road position that the tract might be by the Dominican himself, rather than a follower.

The remaining essays in Part One turn to exploring some of Eckhart's sources and various aspects of his philosophical teaching. Chronologically speaking, the earliest essay on sources is that of Eliza Rubino on "Eckhart and the Pseudo-Dionysius." Rubino's essay shows that contrary to what is often thought, Eckhart depended primarily on the *De divinis nominibus* in his use of Dionysius, citing the book 36 times, as compared to 12 citations for the *De caelesti hierarchia* and only five for the *De mystica theologia*. We are left wondering why the Dominican made so little use of the *De mystica theologia*. Alessandro Palazzo provides a thorough survey on "Eckhart's Islamic and Jewish Sources: Avicenna, Avicbron, and Averroes" (Maimonides is treated in a later essay). In line with recent trends in scholarship, Palazzo stresses the importance of the Avicennan dimension in Eckhart's thought. The essay is particularly insightful for showing how Eckhart used his sources for the most part to buttress positions that he had already worked out within the context of his own thinking.

Finally, three other essays in Part One take up essential philosophico-theological themes in the Dominican's teaching: transcendental terms; analogy; and anthropology. Eckhart's long engagement with the transcendental terms (being, one, true, good) has elicited much literature over many decades and not a little disagreement. Tamar Tsopurashvili charts a path through this complex dimension of Eckhart's thought, providing a number of new insights, especially with regard to the correlation of the ontological, henological, ethical, and epistemological levels of his thinking. Also central to Eckhart's philosophy and its relation to theology is the role of analogy, once again a topic of frequent attention in both older and newer literature on Eckhart. Jeremiah Hackett and Jennifer Hart Weed show that it is only by seeing Eckhart's view of analogy within the broader context of late 13th-century scholasticism that its inner character can emerge. Their essay, "From Aquinas to Eckhart on Analogy,"

demonstrates Eckhart's use of, but also development beyond, Thomas's teaching on analogy and provides a helpful survey of major discussions of this significant teaching. Eckhart's doctrine of human nature is among the most important and controversial aspects of his teaching and preaching. A number of the articles condemned in John XXII's bull *In agro dominico* reflect the more controversial themes of the Dominican's anthropology. Udo Kern's contribution, "Eckhart on Anthropology," is a masterful and concise summary of a difficult but essential theme of the German Dominican.

The value of the essays from Part One of the Brill *A Companion to Meister Eckhart* rests both in their success in introducing interested readers to one of the most important of medieval thinkers, as well as the way in which they serve to open up new avenues in future Eckhart research.

MEISTER ECKHART'S LIFE, TRAINING, CAREER, AND TRIAL

Walter Senner OP

1. ORIGINS

After more than 120 years of historical research we still lack a detailed knowledge of the life of Meister Eckhart. On the contrary, modern research has given rise to unfounded hypotheses and even to fantasies.¹ The main reason for this is that most sources that could give us firsthand information have perished over the course of six centuries due to wars, fires, and the dissolution of monasteries. So only some fragments of the acts of the annual provincial chapters of the German Dominican provinces have been preserved. They contain decisions and dispositions including assignations for studies and for offices such as lector (teacher in a priory). Yet none of them contains anything on Meister Eckhart.

The first certain biographical date we have for Meister Eckhart is from Easter (18 April) 1294, when, as *lector Sententiarum*, he preached a sermon in Paris.² This gives us a secure date from which to infer the curriculum of studies that he had to pursue in order to reach this position. The position of *lector Sententiarum* at the theological faculty of the University of Paris—also called *baccalaureus formatus*—was a two-year teaching assignment

¹ Secondo Bongiovanni, Gwendoline Jarczyk, Pierre-Jean Labarrière, and Benoît Vermander, *L'anneau immobile: regards croisés sur Maître Eckhart* (Paris: 2005), 11. For very informative and helpful conversations on the matter treated here in regard to the trial of Meister Eckhart I thank the late Prof. Winfried Trusen, who was the first scholar to give an account of Meister Eckhart's trial based properly on expertise in the history of law. I also thank Prof. Loris Sturlese, Lecce, whose exemplary edition of the *Acta Echardiana* (note 2) provides the sources for a large part of this contribution. I cordially thank also my collaborators Hans Gonzalez for correcting my German-syntax-style English, and Barbara Bartocci and Dr Jana Ilnicka for reviewing the quotations and for checking the Latin. Dr Klaus Bernward Springer, Erfurt, has made useful comments especially on Thuringian and Erfurt history. Prof. Jeremiah Hackett, the editor of this volume, has revised the English style.

² *Acta Echardiana* n. 4: Meister Eckhart, *Lateinische Werke* V (Stuttgart: 2006), 157; 136–48 (Meister Eckhart, *Lateinische Werke* will be abbreviated as *LW*). This sermon has been found in a collection of Paris university sermons by Thomas Kaeppli, "Praedicator monoculus: sermons Parisiens de la fin du XIII^e siècle," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 27 (1957), 120–67, see 124 sq., n. 44; on dating the sermons: 143–47; on the manuscript see 167; on Eckhart's sermon and possibly others by him contained there, see 159–63.

to lecture on the *Sententiae* of Peter Lombard. This was the set handbook for systematic theology. The *lector Sententiarum* also assisted the *magister* in disputations. The task of lector was the decisive qualification for a theologian to advance to become a *magister* at this faculty himself—the most prestigious position in occidental theology.³ The Dominican order assigned only the most promising members to this office and only after they had already had a long teaching experience. As the Faculty of Theology at Paris had fixed the minimum age for promotion to the position of *magister* at the age of 35,⁴ it has commonly been assumed that Eckhart may have been born around 1260. This, however, is just a hypothesis, since it is possible that he was older when he was promoted, or even that he was a few years younger, as had been the case with Thomas Aquinas. In this chapter I will show that it is more probable to suppose that Eckhart had been born some years before 1260, perhaps in 1250 or even some years earlier. In any case, we cannot be sure of the year of his birth.

A Paris university sermon on the Feast of St Augustine (28 August) or the translation of his relics (28 February) was reported “*ab ore magistri Echardi de hochheim*.”⁵ Heinrich Suso Denifle, who found this document and was the first to critically investigate the sources of Meister Eckhart’s life and work, inferred from this that Hochheim, according to medieval naming conventions, was his birthplace.⁶ Today there are several places with this name. Denifle found a document, where, in 1305, 19 May, *Magister Eckardus* attests to a donation made by the late “*Dominus Eckhardus miles dictus de Hochheim*” to the Cistercian nuns’ abbey of the Holy Cross at Gotha.⁷ He concluded from this that the Meister was a son of that knight and thus came from the village of Hochheim north of Gotha

³ Palémon Glorieux, “L’enseignement au moyen âge: techniques et méthodes en usage à la Faculté de Théologie de Paris au XIII^e siècle,” *Archives d’histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 43 (1968), 65–186, see 98–100 and 141. On the duration of the lectures on the *Sententiae*, see Appendix 1 of the present volume.

⁴ Palémon Glorieux, “L’enseignement . . . (note 3), 99.

⁵ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2) n. 7: *LW V*, 158; 85–99. On both occasions the University of Paris calendar prescribes: “Non legitur in aliqua facultate: et fit sermo in Augustinis” (not necessarily by an Augustinian hermit). *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, ed. Henricus S. Denifle (hereafter *CUP*) no. 1192: vol. 2, (Paris: 1891); 712a and 713b.

⁶ Heinrich S. Denifle: “Die Heimat Meister Eckeharts,” *Archiv für Literatur- und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters* 5 (1890), 349–64. The earlier hypotheses about Eckhart’s provenance are listed by: Xavier de Hornstein, *Les grands mystiques allemands du XIV^e siècle, Eckhart, Tauler, Suso: état présent des problèmes* (Lucerne: 1922), 3–8.

⁷ Heinrich S. Denifle: “Die Heimat Meister Eckeharts,” *Archiv für Literatur- und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters* 5 (1890), 354, note 1; cf. *Acta Echardiana* (note 2) n. 11: *LW V*, 162 sq.

in Thuringia.⁸ This descent from a feudal knight [ministerial],⁹ belonging to the lower nobility, even led to speculation in the 1930s concerning the noble Germanic character of Eckhart's mysticism.¹⁰ Perhaps as a reaction to this chauvinistic approach, Joseph Koch, in examining the documents, was skeptical about Eckhart's family origins: since he sealed with his seal as Dominican provincial and not with the seal of his family, he would not have been known in the documents as a son of that knight, and nowhere else except in the quoted Paris sermon is he called "de Hochheim."¹¹ Both observations are, however, unconvincing. As Koch admits, as a friar Eckhart would not have used a private seal. Further, he did not usually name himself "Eckhart de Hochheim." This may have been due to the fact that his place of origin was relatively unknown, as Koch admits himself.¹²

In 1978 Erika Albrecht showed that family seals were not used in Thuringia during the period in question. Thus, the Dominican Eckhart would have been known to the public as the son of the knight, Eckhart de Hochheim.¹³ Using other documents, she found that members of this family—a preferred first name seems to have been *Eck(e)hard(us)*—figured in documents from 1219 onwards. Albrecht comes to the following conclusions: "first the Hochheims were a family of Feudal Knights in the service of the Wangenheims; second they derived their name 'von Hochheim' from the village of Hochheim near Gotha, but [in the 14th century] did not consider it anymore as the place-name of their dwelling."¹⁴ Their residence since the late 13th century was at Tambach on the northern fringe of the "Thüringerwald" mountains. The "von Hochheims" appear in some documents in close relation to the Cistercian (monks) abbey

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ A nobleman in the service of a higher-ranking ruler. See Knut Schulz: "Ministerialität, Ministerialen," *Lexikon des Mittelalters* 6 (Munich: 1993), 636–39.

¹⁰ Ernst Benz: "Über den Adel in der deutschen Mystik," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 14 (1936), 505–35, see 512–15.

¹¹ Joseph Koch: "Kritische Studien zum Leben Meister Eckharts," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 29 (1959), 5–51 and 30 (1960), 5–52; Koch, *Kleine Schriften* 1, (*Storia e letteratura*) 127 (Roma: 1973), 247–347, see 250 sq. A thorough critique of speculations about the life and doctrine of Meister Eckhart up to ca. 1920 was already published by Xavier de Hornstein, *Les grands mystiques* (note 6); on Eckhart's birthplace and family see 5–7.

¹² Hornstein (note 6), 5–7; Winfried Trusen, *Der Prozeß gegen Meister Eckhart, Vorgeschichte, Verlauf und Folgen*, (Rechts- und Staatswissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Görres-Gesellschaft) NS 54 (Paderborn: 1988), 12 sq., refutes Koch's hypotheses on the basis of diplomatic considerations.

¹³ Erika Albrecht, "Zur Herkunft Meister Eckharts," *Amtsblatt der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche in Thüringen* 31 (1978), 28–34, see 30.

¹⁴ Ibid., 31.

of Georgenthal.¹⁵ In the village of Hochheim there were no free peasants until the late 14th century; half of the farms depended directly on the Wangenheim family, while the other half depended on their feudal knights. So, according to Albrecht, it is not possible that a son from this village could have become a priest in the Dominican order.¹⁶ Considering the makeup of the population, and especially the one noble family from the other Thuringian Hochheim (today a suburb of Erfurt; during the Middle Ages it was one of the villages around Erfurt providing for the archiepiscopal kitchen “Küchendorfer”), it is unlikely that Meister Eckhart would have come from there.¹⁷ Winfried Trusen argues that Tambach or a castle near this village is the most likely birthplace.¹⁸ Recently, Albrecht’s findings have been doubted by Eckhart Trebel who holds that Hochheim near Gotha was the dwelling place of his family.¹⁹ In any case we can state with some certainty that Meister Eckhart was a member of a Thuringian family of feudal knights that lived to the west of Erfurt.

Nicholas of Bibra’s poem, *Occultus Erfordensis*, provides a vivid description of Erfurt and of life in this city during the last decades of the 13th century²⁰—and not without some critical remarks about some of the clergy. Although the schools in that town are not explicitly mentioned,²¹ Nicholas speaks of the learned among the canons²² and of “a good thousand students,” whom he divides into the wicked, lazy, and docile.²³

The Dominicans and Franciscans are praised and compared with the biblical Enoch and Elias for their pastoral zeal and doctrine.²⁴ Around

¹⁵ Ibid., 31 sq.

¹⁶ Ibid., 33.

¹⁷ Ibid., 33 sq.

¹⁸ Trusen, *Prozeß* (see note 12 above), 14 sq.

¹⁹ See <http://www.eckhart.de/index.htm?aktuell>. There is no persistent identifier for this website, which generally gives good up-to-date information concerning Meister Eckhart. However, some interpretations found there cannot be shared in this article.

²⁰ Edited by Christiane Mundhenk, *Schriften des Vereins für die Geschichte und Altertumskunde von Erfurt* 3 (Weimar: 1997).

²¹ There were three collegiate churches, two abbeys, three mendicant convents with schools, and three municipal schools at that time. See *Handbuch der historischen Stätten*, vol. 9 *Thüringen*, ed. Hans Patze (Stuttgart: 1968), 113; Lorenz Sönke, *Studium generale Erfordense: zum Erfurter Schulleben im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert*, (Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters) 34 (Stuttgart: 1989); Helmut G. Walther: “Ordensstudium und theologische Profilbildung: die ‘Studia generalia’ in Erfurt und Paris an der Wende vom 13. zum 14. Jahrhundert,” in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt*, ed. Andreas Speer and Lydia Wegener, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 32 (Berlin: 2005), 75–94.

²² *Occultus Erfordensis* (see note 20 above), v. 1487–1504: 232–35.

²³ Ibid., v. 1571–1604: 238–43.

²⁴ Ibid., v. 1512–1546: 234–37.

the year 1300, grammar and logic were the main disciplines taught at Erfurt.²⁵ The curriculum of the Parisian Faculty of Arts was adopted at Erfurt in the early 14th century or perhaps some years earlier.²⁶ This may have been the milieu where the young Eckhart learned and sensed the call to the friars, but we have no indication where and when he joined the Friars Preachers.

There were Dominican priories in Western Thuringia at Erfurt (1229), Eisenach (1236), Nordhausen (1286), and Mühlhausen (1291).²⁷ Erfurt is closest to both Hochheim villages and to Tambach, whereas the Nordhausen and Mühlhausen priories had been founded at a time when Eckhart must have already been a Dominican for some years. Moreover, he was subsequently prior at Erfurt. So it seems likely that he entered this nearest, biggest, and most famous priory in the vicinity of his birthplace. However, although this is the received opinion, it is not necessarily a fact.²⁸ Joseph Koch proposed that Eckhart could have been a student in the Faculty of Arts at Paris in 1277;²⁹ it has even been inferred that he would have "entered the Dominican order at fifteen years of age" (in 1275).³⁰ This implies that he would have been sent to Paris for study just a short time after his noviciate. This, however, was not the customary practice of the Dominican order.

2. ECKHART'S TRAINING AND CAREER³¹

The curricular requirements and the known practice of the Dominican order did not permit a friar to study for the master's degree without a time in duties either as a lector or as an administrator. When we apply this fact to Meister Eckhart's life, we now arrive at the following minimum time: a period as novitiate of one year (not after 1278, and most probably

²⁵ Sönke (see note 21 above), 72–77 and 87.

²⁶ Ibid., 107–34.

²⁷ Paulus von Loë, *Statistisches über die Ordensprovinz Saxonien*, (Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens in Deutschland) 4 (Leipzig: 1910), 11 sq.

²⁸ This was prematurely assumed, for example, by Kurt Ruh, *Meister Eckhart, Theologe, Prediger, Mystiker* (Munich: 1990), 20. That Gotha and its surroundings, including the more western Hochheim and Tambach, belonged to the termination district of Eisenach does not necessarily mean that Eckhart would have joined the Dominicans there.

²⁹ See Koch (note 11 above), 253 sq.

³⁰ Oliver Davies, "Later Medieval Mystics," in *The Medieval Theologians*, ed. Gillian R. Evans (Malden, Mass.: 2001), 221–32, see 225.

³¹ For an account of Dominican education in general, see Walter Senner OP, Appendix 1 in the present volume.

between 1266 and 1269), which would have involved preparative instruction of Latin grammar, choir lessons and so on for one to two years; a period in the *studium logicalium* of two to three years and in the *studium naturalium* for two years; a period teaching logic for a minimum of two to three years; *studium theologiae* at a *studium particulare* for two or more years; teaching *philosophia naturalis* for two years (variant A) and teaching theology (*Sentences*) for at least two years (variant B) before teaching *philosophia naturalis* for two years; and a period of at least three years of studying theology at a *studium generale* (presumably Paris), and maybe acting as *cursor* for two or more years, followed by teaching or pastoral activity in Germany for at least two years, prior to being sent to Paris *ad legendum Sententias*.

On the assumption that Eckhart would have entered the novitiate in 1278, this would mean he had spent just 16 years as a Dominican prior to going to Paris to attain the bachelor in theology degree. This presupposes that he would have advanced most expeditiously, remaining at no stage of his studies and in no office longer than the minimum time. It is more likely that he joined the Friars Preachers somewhat earlier. Coming as a 15-year-old boy he would have had to pass at least one year after the novitiate with preparative instruction; thus the latest year to be assumed for his birth is 1262. We do not know where and when Eckhart entered the order, performed the different stages of his studies, or which offices he held or for how long.

It is even possible that he had been sent to Paris for studies some time before 1294 to read the *Sentences*. According to Koch's hypothesis, he would have studied the arts in Paris around 1277.³² However, this hypothesis is not sufficiently justified. Meister Eckhart speaks in his defense in 1327 of "our times" when referring to the fact that "Paris masters of theology had the mandate from <their> superior to examine the books of the most famous men Saint Thomas Aquinas and brother Albert the bishop as suspect and erroneous."³³ This does not necessarily imply that he himself was present in Paris at that time. Therefore the conjecture by the editor

³² See "Kritische Studien" (note 11 above), 252–54.

³³ "Maxime cum iam pridem magistri theologiae Parisius nostris temporibus mandatum habuerint superioris de examinandis libris praeclarissimorum virorum sancti Thomae de Aquino et domini fratris Alberti tamquam suspectis et erroneis." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2 above), n. 77, LW V, 276, 2–4. The English translation, available in *Meister Eckhart: the Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defence*, ed. Edmund Colledge and Bernard McGinn, The Classics of Western Spirituality (Mahwah, N.J.: 1981), 72, is not precise; they give "in my own lifetime" for "nostris temporibus."

of the *Acta Echardiana* that Eckhart may have been in Paris around 1286 “when also the works of Saint Thomas Aquinas and Albert the Great were examined by a commission of theologians”³⁴ is far from certain, although it is possible.

In the Bibliotheca Amploniana, Erfurt, Ms. 321,³⁵ one finds a collection of five *principia in libros Sententiarum*. The second *principium* is identified by a hand somewhat later than that of the scribe as “echardus pro principio: collatio in libros sententiarum.”³⁶ Joseph Koch convincingly argued that this *Principium* is an authentic work by Eckhart.³⁷ He dated it “in one of the years from 1297 to 1300.”³⁸ However, he did so on the assumption that a Dominican would have remained at the University of Paris from the beginning of his time as *baccalaureus sententiaris* until at least his graduation as *magister*. As the university sermon on St Augustine shows

³⁴ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2 above), n. 2, LW V, 155 sq.

³⁵ Fol. 93ra–va as part of a collection of 5 *principia*, fol. 92va–92vb. In Wilhelm Schum, *Beschreibendes Verzeichnis der Amplonianischen Handschriften-Sammlung zu Erfurt* (Berlin: 1887), 222 sq., the work is described erroneously as “Sermones de Genes. c. 2, v. 10. . . .” See the more detailed description by Joseph Koch in Meister Eckhart: *Die lateinischen Werke*, V, 1 (Stuttgart: 1936), 3–5. Koch recognized that this manuscript consists of two parts bound together later on (see p. 3), he supposes a Dominican origin of the second part (see p. 5 sq.), although there is not sufficient evidence for this. The manuscript as a whole was given to the *Collegium Portae coeli* by its former alumnus magister Nicolaus Geylfluy de Spira in 1445 (Schum, note 35 above, 222); on the issue see also Loris Sturlese: “Meister Eckhart in der Bibliotheca Amploniana: Neues zur Datierung des ‘Opus tripartitum,’” first published in *Die Bibliotheca Amploniana: ihre Bedeutung im Spannungsfeld von Aristotelismus, Nominalismus und Humanismus*, ed. Andreas Speer, *Miscellanea mediaevalia* 23 (Berlin: 1995), 434–46; now available in Loris Sturlese, *Homo divinus: philosophische Projekte in Deutschland zwischen Meister Eckhart und Heinrich Seuse* (Stuttgart: 2007), 95–106, see 98 sq.

³⁶ Fol. 93va, see Koch (note 35 above), 4.

³⁷ Koch (note 35 above), 5–7. It was once thought that the manuscript Bruges, Stadsbibliotheek, Ms. 491, contained Meister Eckhart’s *Commentary on the Sentences*: see Joseph Koch, “Ein neuer Eckhart-Fund: der Sentenzenkommentar,” *Forschungen und Fortschritte* 10 (1943), 20–23, enlarged reprint in Koch, *Kleine Schriften* 1 (Rome: 1973), 239–46. Indeed, there are some quotations ascribed to Eckhart, but it is rather a miscellaneous collection of commentaries by different authors, cf. Wouter Goris and Martin Pickavé, “Die Lectura Thomasina des Guilelmus Petri de Godino (ca. 1260–1336): ein Beitrag zur Text- und Überlieferungsgeschichte,” *Roma magistra mundi* (FS Leonard E. Boyle), vol. 3, ed. Jacqueline Hamesse (Louvain-la-Neuve: 1998), 83–109, see 95–108. The enigma of this manuscript, however, is not yet solved, see Walter Senner, *Johannes von Sterngassen OP und sein Sentenzenkommentar*, vol. 1 (Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens) 4 (Berlin: 1995), 1, 180, and 355.

³⁸ Koch (note 35 above), 8. Ruh, *Meister Eckhart* (note 28 above), 19 sq., Georg Steer, “Meister Eckharts deutsche ‘reden’ und ‘predigten’ in seiner Erfurter Zeit,” *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt* (note 21 above), 34–55, see 39 sq., and Kurt Flasch, *Meister Eckhart: Philosoph des Christentums* (Munich: 2010), 68, date the *principium* to “fall 1293”—this is possible but not certain.

us, already in 1294, Eckhart was such a bachelor.³⁹ We do not know more precisely when his term began and when it ended, leaving us with the possibility of the period between 1292 and 1296. During this time Johannes de Ardenburgo⁴⁰ was regent master of the French Dominican chair; Johannes Jordani Romanus⁴¹ probably held the chair for Dominicans from other provinces, whereas Johannes Quidort⁴² was baccalaureus of the French chair; William Peter Godin from the *provincia Provinciae*, who was Meister Eckhart's successor (1304–06) after his first Paris regency and whom Eckhart would later meet as a cardinal at Avignon, was a student.⁴³ Possibly of some importance for Eckhart was the Augustinian, Master James of Viterbo. In his first *Quodlibet* there are three arguments added on the margin of one manuscript and ascribed to "Eckardus."⁴⁴ In a letter by Stephanus de Bisuntio, master of the Dominican order, permission is given to the "*bachelario Parisiensi*" stipulating that after he would have received the license in the Faculty of Theology he could take a *socius* of his own choice from his Teutonia province. As the editor Heinrich Finke already supposed, this is to be connected to Dietrich of Freiberg,⁴⁵ who was promoted to *magister* in the fall of 1296.⁴⁶

³⁹ See above note 2.

⁴⁰ Thomas Kaeppli, *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum Medii Aevi*, vol. 1–4 (Rome: 1970–1993), (hereafter *SOP*), see vol. 2, 376; Palémon Glorieux, *Répertoire des maîtres en théologie de Paris au XIII^e siècle*, no. 44, vol. 1, *Études de philosophie médiévale* 17 (Paris: 1933), 161. Bernardus Guidonis has him as number 42 in his list of Dominican *Magistri in theologia Parisius*, but for the period in question this cannot be considered a precise chronological order: see Stephanus de Salanhaco and Bernardus Guidonis, *De quatuor in quibus Deus Praedicatorum ordinem insignivit*, ed. Tomas Kaeppli, *MOPH* 22 (Rome: 1949), 130, 3; see also note 55.

⁴¹ *SOP* (note 40 above) 2, 461; *Magistri* (note 40 above), no. 43, 160, 4. However, it can not be excluded that Guillelmus Flamingus, of whom we know very little, would have been regent master on the foreigners' chair for some time when Eckhart was a *baccalaureus*, see *SOP* (note 40 above), 2, 98; *Magistri* (note 40), no. 47, 160, 14; Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40 above) no. 53: 1, 104.

⁴² *SOP* (note 40 above), 2, 517; *Magistri* (note 40 above), no. 54, 161, 16; Glorieux: *Répertoire* (note 40 above), no. 60, 1, 189.

⁴³ *SOP* (note 40 above), 2, 152; *Magistri* (note 40 above), no. 53, 161.12–15; Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 59: 1, 187.

⁴⁴ Regent master 1293–1300: Jacobi de Viterbio OESA, *Disputatio prima de Quodlibet*, ed. Eelko Ypma, *Cassiciacum Suppl.* 1 (Würzburg: 1968), v sq.; Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40 above), no. 401, 2, 309; *Biographisch-bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, vol. 2, ed. Traugott Bautz (hereafter *BBKL*) (Herzberg: 1990), 1492 sq. For the text attributed to Meister Eckhart, see below, note 55.

⁴⁵ Theodoricus de Vribergo will be referred to in this volume as Dietrich of Freiberg, the name by which he is known in English-language studies.

⁴⁶ Heinrich Finke, *Ungedruckte Dominikanerbriefe* (Paderborn: 1891), 162, no. 155; Loris Sturlese, *Dokumente und Forschungen zu Leben und Werk Dietrichs von Freiberg* (*Corpus philosophorum Teutonicorum medii aevi*) 3 (Hamburg: 1984), 38 sq.

The one work whose authorship is best attested is the “Rede der unterscheidunge” (*Counsels on discernment*).⁴⁷ Here Meister Eckhart is called: “der vicarius von turingen, der prior von erfurt, brüder eckhart predigerordens” (vicar of *Thuringia*, prior of Erfurt, brother Eckhart of the Order of Preachers).⁴⁸ Thus Eckhart has been elected by the Erfurt Dominican community as their prior, the superior of the house and delegated by the provincial as his vicar for the *natio Thuringiae*. This was so because the whole Teutonia province was far too big to enable the provincial to visit the different priories frequently. There is a general agreement in Eckhart research that this was after he lectured as *baccalaureus Sententiarium* in Paris. He was installed by the then provincial Dietrich of Freiberg (who held this office between 1293 and 1296) as his vicar for the *natio Thuringiae*.⁴⁹ Once again, and while this assumption is not unlikely, it is simply a conjecture. Since, in 1298, the accumulation of the offices of *prior conventus*—elected by the local community and expected to be present there, and *vicarius*, delegated by the provincial prior and obliged to travel frequently between the different priories and (if there were any) the nuns’ monasteries—was forbidden by the general chapter,⁵⁰ this year is generally assumed as *terminus ante quem* of one of those two offices. Indeed, it is a valid assumption. Yet in the strict sense, it might even have been some time earlier. Thus we can claim that some time prior to his going to Paris for graduation as a *magister*, Eckhart was prior of the Erfurt Dominicans.

⁴⁷ DW V, 185–376. See Joseph Quint, DW V (Stuttgart: 1963), 168–71; Kurt Ruh: *Meister Eckhart* (note 28 above), 31 sq.; Georg Steer, “Meister Eckharts deutsche ‘reden’” (note 38 above), 34–55, see 40.

⁴⁸ DW V, 185.2 sq. Nine of the 39 manuscripts used by Quint do not contain these lines. The *natio Thuringiae* consisted of the following priories: Erfurt (founded 1229), Eisenach (1236), Nordhausen (1286), Jena (1286), Treysa (1287), Mühlhausen (1291), and Marburg (1292). See Loë: *Statistisches . . . Saxonien* (note 27 above), 11 sq. The Dominican nuns’ convents at Cronschwitz and Weida belonged to the *natio Misniae*: Hieronymus Wilms, *Das älteste Verzeichnis der deutschen Dominikanerinnenklöster*, (Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens in Deutschland) 24 (Leipzig: 1928), 93–96.

⁴⁹ See, e.g. Koch, “Kritische Studien” (note 11 above), 258; Ruh (note 28 above), 31. Flasch, *Meister Eckhart* (note 38 above), 71 is certain on this point, stating that in “1294 Eckhart came from Paris [to Erfurt].” Heribert Fischer, *Meister Eckhart: Einführung in sein philosophisches Denken* (Freiburg: 1974), 13, erroneously supposes that Eckhart would have been installed into both offices, prior and vicar, by Dietrich of Freiberg—a Dominican conventual prior is elected by the local community.

⁵⁰ “Ne conventus per diutinam priorum absenciam debito regimine defraudentur, volumus et ordinamus, quod iidem priores non fiant vicarii vel inquisitores, nec alia eis committantur officia, per que oporteat eos a suis conventibus absentare. Et si de aliquibus secus factum est, ab altero officio absolvantur.” *Acta capitulorum generalium Ordinis Praedicatorum*, vol. 1, ed. Benedictus M. Reichert (hereafter ACG), MOPH 3 (Rome: 1898), 289.30–290.3.

And we can claim that some time before summer 1298 he was also vicar of the provincial for the *natio Thuringiae*.

From the list of Parisian Dominican masters by Bernard Gui, it can be established that Meister Eckhart was promoted to master of theology in 1302.⁵¹ Bernard wrote this in 1307—sufficiently near to the reported event.⁵² By comparison with the *principia* of the *baccalaurei Sententiarum*, no specific period was prescribed. Thus, we cannot be sure at what point during the academic year this took place. It may have been in the fall. Raimundus Romani de Marologio, who is named directly after him by Bernard Gui, graduated and was master of the chair for the *provincia Franciae* in 1302 shortly after he had been elected provincial, and it seems that he continued his lectures until the end of the term.⁵³

As regent master, Eckhart had to lecture on a book of the Bible each academic year, to preside and determine disputations, and to preach. The first two of the *Quaestiones Parisienses* and a question by the Franciscan Master Gonsalvus Hispanus with arguments by Meister Eckhart can certainly be attributed to this first Paris regency.⁵⁴ A recently discovered fragment of a question is most likely from this period as well.⁵⁵ There is some evidence that the first *Commentary on Genesis* (at least the beginning), the *Commentary on Ecclesiasticus*, and perhaps the *Commentary on the Book of Wisdom* are from the first Paris *magisterium*—or even earlier, as Eckhart

⁵¹ "Fr. Aychardus Theutonicus fuit licentiatu anno domini MCCCII. Hic fuit confirmatus in priorem provinciale Saxonie in generali capitulo Tholosano, anno domini MCC-CIV." *Magistri* (note 40 above), no. 51, 131, 6–8.

⁵² *Magistri* (note 40 above), the introduction by Thomas Kaeppeli contains rich but scattered information (pp. VI–XVIII & XXI–XXIV & XXIX–XXXI & XXXVII) on the successive stages of the elaboration of this work, begun by Stephanus de Salanhaco (†1291), and continued and enlarged by Bernard Gui.

⁵³ "Fr. Raymundus Romani de Marologio oriundus, licentiatu anno domini MCCCII; erat autem tunc prior provincialis Francie legitque prior provincialis existens." *Magistri* (note 40 above), no. 52, 131.9–11; see *SOP* (note 40 above), 3, 287; Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 58: 1, 185.

⁵⁴ Found by Martin Grabmann, *Neuaufgefundene Quaestiones Meister Eckharts und ihre Stellung in seinem geistigen Entwicklungsgange: Untersuchungen und Texte, (Abhandlungen der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, philos.-philol. u. histor.)* 32, 7 (Munich: 1927)—this edition is cited in the current chapter; reprinted in Grabmann, *Gesammelte Akademieabhandlungen*, vol. 1, (Veröffentlichungen des Grabmann-Institutes) NS 25, 1 (Paderborn: 1979), 261–381 (also contains the original page numbers); 101–11; *Magistri Eckardi Opera latina*, fasc. 13 ed. Antoine Dondaine, with an introduction by Raymond Klibansky (Leipzig: 1936); *LW* V, 27–71, see the introduction by Bernhard Geyer, 29–33.

⁵⁵ Troyes, Médiathèque de l'Agglomération Troyenne (formerly: Bibliothèque municipale), Ms. 269, fol. 85v marg.

had to lecture in various Dominican *studia*.⁵⁶ So unfortunately none of the known Bible commentaries can be assigned with sufficient certainty to Meister Eckhart's first Parisian regency. The sermon on St Augustine "*Vas auri solidum*" (a solid vessel of gold) has at its conclusion an *explicit* that states: "This sermon is in this way reported from the mouth of Master Echard de Hochheim, on the day of St Augustine, at Paris."⁵⁷ Thus, 28 August 1302, and 28 February 1303, are the possible dates. The dating of the *Opus tripartitum*, the first draft of which is estimated by Sturlese with convincing arguments as quite some time before Eckhart's second Parisian regency, is somewhat enigmatic in view of the attribution of *esse* (being) to God in contradiction of the second (chronologically first) Parisian question.⁵⁸

During Meister Eckhart's first Parisian regency, there was the already mentioned Raimundus Romani de Marologio in the French Dominicans' chair. Remigius Clari de Girolamis (de Florentia) was promoted on order of Pope Boniface VIII, but he seems not to have exercised the office.⁵⁹ Romeus de Brugaria from Catalonia was probably Meister Eckhart's *baccalaureus* at that time.⁶⁰ Besides the Franciscan Master Gonsalvus Hispanus,⁶¹

⁵⁶ Both Ruh (note 28 above), 29, and Flasch (note 38 above), 99, view Eckhart's scriptural commentaries too readily as products of his university teaching only; Sturlese (note 35 above), 103 sq. is more cautious.

⁵⁷ "Iste sermo sic est reportatus ab ore magistri Echardi de Hochheim, die beati Augustini, Parisius" *LW* V, 99, 5 sq.; see the opening pages of this chapter. The sermon is contained in Erfurt, Bibliotheca Amploniana, Ms. Fol. 36, 2nd guard-leaf (from early 14th century). See the introduction by Bernhard Geyer (note 54 above), 87 sq.; Schum (note 35 above), 29 sq.; Sturlese (note 35 above), 97 sq.; the manuscript would merit a more detailed description. A referral in the German Sermon Quint 16b with a parallel theme: *DW* I, 263–76. On the date see above, note 5.

⁵⁸ Sturlese (note 35), 103–06. *LW* V, 40.5–7, against *LW* I, 156.11–158.4 and e.g. Ruh (note 28), 72. Concerning the contradiction in a central point even in Flasch's recent work (note 38), 110 and 114–17 no solution is offered.

⁵⁹ "Fr. Remigius Florentinus, licentiatius per Bonifacium papam VIII anno domini MCCCII" *Magistri* (note 40), no. 50, 131.4 sq.; see *SOP* (note 40) 3, 297, and 4, 259; Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 56, 1, 177. There is no evidence in *CUP*. However, we have found that in this year there is a papal order to promote Johannes de Capella OCist: *CUP* (note 5), no. 629, 2, 98 sq.; in the following year, still during the pontifical sanctions against the University of Paris, Pope Benedict XI gave at the Lateran the licence to Alexander Bonino de Alexandria OFM, who afterwards taught at Paris from 1304 to 1308/9: *CUP* (note 5), no. 639, 2, 105 sq.; see Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 340, 2, 199.

⁶⁰ *SOP* (note 40), 3, 333; *Magistri* (note 40), no. 56, 132.4–7; Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 62, 1, 196.

⁶¹ Fr Gonsalvi Hispani, *Quaestiones disputatae et de Quodlibet*, ed. Leon Amorós, Bibliotheca Franciscana Scholastica medii aevi 9 (Quarrachi, 1935); on his life and work see the introduction, xiv–lxxii; *BBKL* (note 44) 30, (Nordhausen: 2009), 505–09; Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), 2, no. 338, 194.

whose *baccalaureus* was John Duns Scotus,⁶² Petrus de Alvernia (*magister regens* 1296–1303),⁶³ and Thomas de Bailly (1301–14)⁶⁴ were among the masters of other schools.

The normal regency period of Dominican masters was three years, but on 26 June 1303, that is to say just three days before the end of his first academic year as *magister regens*, Meister Eckhart was not among the Dominican friars who were forced by the French king, Philip IV, the Fair (1268–1314, king since 1285) under the threat of expulsion from the kingdom to adhere to an appeal directed to a general council against Pope Boniface VIII.⁶⁵ At first glance this allows for two different interpretations: first, Eckhart did refuse to adhere and therefore had to leave France immediately, or second, before the end of the term (Feast of St Peter and Paul, 29 June), he went back to Germany during the summer, and this would have nothing to do with the royal demand.

Although we do not have documentary evidence on Meister Eckhart's attitude towards King Philip the Fair's injunction, a careful study by William Courtenay shows that the action with the Dominicans at Saint-Jacques (26 June 1303)—from which we have only a list of those who signed—must have been analogous to that with the Franciscans at Cordeliers (24 June 1303), where we have two lists: one of all the friars and one of those who signed.⁶⁶

⁶² Thomas Williams, "The life and works of John Duns the Scot," *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*, ed. T. Williams (Cambridge: 2003), 1–14, see 4 sq.; Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 344, 2, 205.

⁶³ Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 210, 2, 412; *BBKL* (note 44), vol. 7, (Herzberg: 1994), 328–30.

⁶⁴ Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), 1, no. 214, 442; *BBKL* (note 44), vol. 11 (Herzberg: 1996), 1372 sq. The first five of his *Quodlibeta* are contained in the same Ms Avignon 1071 as the *Quaestiones Parisienses* by Meister Eckhart from the first regency.

⁶⁵ Antoine Dondaine, "Documents pour servir à l'histoire de la province de France: l'appel au Concile (1303)," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 22 (1952), 381–429, for the list of the Saint-Jacques priory, Paris, see 403–11. The conflict between Pope Boniface VIII and King Philip the Fair had its impact on the University of Paris. This can be seen in documents from December 1301, when the pope summoned the masters of the theology and law born in France to Rome in order to advise him "in excessibus et damnis Philippi regis corrigendis": *CUP* (note 5) no. 621, 2, 93 (Regestum by Denifle-Chatelain).

⁶⁶ William J. Courtenay, "Between Pope and King: the Parisian letters of adhesion of 1303," *Speculum* 71 (1996), 577–605; on the Franciscans: 590–96, on the Dominicans: 596–99, Eckhart is mentioned on 599. Koch (note 11), 261, after he had pleaded strongly for the first alternative interpretation, left the question open.

At their first provincial chapter, following the general chapter in 1303 (presumably in September),⁶⁷ Meister Eckhart was elected as the prior provincial of the newly founded Dominican province of Saxony (Saxonia).⁶⁸ On the election of Aymericus Placentius as *magister generalis* of the order at the general chapter at Toulouse in 1304 (a chapter of provincials which he attended), Eckhart had not yet been confirmed as prior provincial. The appointment to that office took place on the following Monday.⁶⁹ At the general chapter in 1304 a brief initiative was introduced to have the Saxonia province renamed *Teutonia inferior*.⁷⁰ This may have been proposed by Meister Eckhart. However, the following general chapter of *diffinitores* did not continue with the initiative.

A silent presupposition often made is that Erfurt was the official see of the province of Saxony (Saxonia).⁷¹ During the Middle Ages, however, neither the master general nor the provincials of the Dominicans had such a see, but they were almost continuously traveling to visit their priories and had to be present at the yearly chapters, which were celebrated in different places—the provincial was summoned to each third general chapter and to all provincial chapters.

In his *De officiis ordinis*, Humbert of Romans describes the duties of a provincial prior.⁷² The office required that the prior was prayerful, not too quick in innovations, and that he maintained the good dispositions of his predecessors.⁷³ The provincial had to care for solemn worship and update

⁶⁷ This is assumed because 8 September was the traditional date for the provincial chapter of the Teutonia: Benedikt M. Reichert, "Feier und Geschäftsordnung der Provinzkapitel des Dominikanerordens im 13. Jahrhundert," *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und für Kirchengeschichte* 17 (1903), 102–40, see 120. A letter sent by Eckhart as provincial from Rostock, place of the provincial chapter, on 11 September 1305, also gives reason to infer this for Saxonia. *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 13, 164, see further below.

⁶⁸ "Anno Domini MCCCIII in capitulo provinciali apud Erphordiam fuit electus primus provincialis Saxoniae magister Echardus, qui fuit absolutus apud Neapolim a. D. MCCCXI et missus Parisius ad legendum," Loë, *Statistisches . . . Saxonia* (note 27 above), 46, 16; *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 9, 159.

⁶⁹ *ACG* (note 50), 2, 1, no. 1; see Dominique A. Mortier, *Histoire des Maîtres généraux de l'Ordre des Frères Prêcheurs*, vol. 2, 1263–1323 (Paris: 1905), 429 sq.

⁷⁰ *ACG* (note 50) 2, 3, 9–17.

⁷¹ See e.g. Ruh, *Meister Eckhart* (note 28), 25; Sturlese, *Amploniana* (note 35), 95 and 103.

⁷² Humbertus de Romanis, *De officiis ordinis*, Chapter 2: Humbertus de Romanis, *Opera de vita regulari*, vol. 2, ed. Joachim J. Berthier (Rome: 1889; repr. Turin: 1956), 195–201. The official text *De potestate prioris provincialis* is in, *Constitutiones antiquae Ordinis Praedicatorum*, ed. Antonin H. Thomas, *De oudste constituties van de Dominicanen*, Bibliothèque de la Revue d'histoire Ecclésiastique 42 (Leuven: 1965) (from here onwards: *Const. ant.*): d. 2, Chapter 16: 352–54.

⁷³ Humbertus de Romanis, *De officiis . . .* (note 72), n° 1: 2, 195.

liturgical books throughout his province.⁷⁴ For the common good of the order he must know the priories and the friars and keep peace between friars with different interests and temperaments and between priories, as well as between them and the secular clergy and other orders. He should visit the priories frequently and have with him the legislative texts and the documents granting privileges to the order. Further, he should take care that they are copied for the use of the single priories and that their copies are correct. Another task of the provincial was to care for the foundation of new priories and to provide a good team of friars for these new foundations.⁷⁵ He should help poor priories by sending friars and soliciting better income as well as help from the more economically secure houses. But he should not disclose the weaknesses of friars or houses without good reason. However, he had to correct them and, if this was not possible or not obeyed, he was obliged to report grievances to the provincial chapter or even to the general chapter.⁷⁶ The provincial should remove bad priors and other officials and encourage those who find their office burdensome.⁷⁷ He must seek to be just and have fraternal love for all friars. And he should encourage the weak, confirm the fit, and correct delinquent friars. "Dangerous" and disobedient friars had to be moved to places where they could not do much harm; gravely delinquent friars were to be imprisoned.⁷⁸ An important task of the provincial involves frequent visitations of the priories where he himself or visitators (inspectors) appointed by him should inquire "if the visited friars live in continuous peace, are persistent in study, fervent in preaching, about their reputation, what fruit <they bring>, if in food, in clothing, and in other respects, the order is served according to the rules."⁷⁹ The financial situation also required examination. During his journey, he should preach to the people of the towns in which there are priories. If he cannot do the visitations of all houses himself, then he should delegate visitators.

The provincial is admonished to keep good relations with the bishops in whose dioceses there are priories, with the Brothers Minor (Franciscans),

⁷⁴ Ibid., n^o 2: 2, 196.

⁷⁵ Ibid., n^o 3: 2, 196 sq.

⁷⁶ Ibid., n^o 4: 2, 197.

⁷⁷ Ibid., n^o 5: 2, 197 sq.

⁷⁸ Ibid., n^o 6: 2, 198 sq.

⁷⁹ "referre debent <visitatores> de hiis, quos visitaverint, fratribus, si in pace continui, in studio assidui, in predicatione ferventes, que de eis fama, quis fructus, si in victu et vestitu et in aliis secundum tenorem institutionum ordo servetur" *Const. ant.* (note 72): d. 2, Chapter 18: 354.1–353.9; this is valid for the visiting provincial as well.

and with other friends of the order.⁸⁰ Finally, the preparation of and the presiding at provincial chapters and the attendance at each third general chapter are duties of the provincial prior.⁸¹ Meister Eckhart fulfilled all these tasks during his term—a sign that he was not considered by the friars to be lacking in practical sense and managerial skills. If his exercise of administrative office had received strong criticism, he would have been removed from office by one of the yearly general chapters or voted down by a provincial chapter.

The two capitular sermons on the reading for the Feast of the Birth of Mary (8 September: Sir. 24:23–31) provide evidence of Meister Eckhart's presence at provincial chapters.

According to the preserved order for such chapters from the second half of 13th century, the provincial had to preach two sermons himself, or had to delegate (one of) them to another friar.⁸² Koch thought of two different chapters as indications of two separate dates, but the order explicitly demands a sermon on the first and another on the second day.⁸³ That both sermons are followed by a lecture on the biblical theme poses a difficulty for interpretation which we shall not try to solve here.⁸⁴ In the first sermon Eckhart explains the challenge of the friar preacher by the *pro-thema*: "We are Christ's good scent" (2 Cor. 2:14f.). This consists in "purity of life, sincerity of intention and the sweet scent of <the preacher's> opinion or fame."⁸⁵ The good preacher intends nothing but Christ. Whereas innkeepers promise commodities at a good price, the Lord invites for free⁸⁶ and promises what all love: "the purity of the beloved, his plenitude or fullness, and his sweetness."⁸⁷ This is applied to divine wisdom communicated to mankind. The last part of the sermon relates to the Virgin Mary as "Mother of the Incarnate Wisdom."⁸⁸ The second capitular

⁸⁰ Humbertus de Romanis, *De officiis* (note 72), Chapter 2, no. 7: 2, 199 sq.

⁸¹ Ibid., no. 8, 2, 200 sq.

⁸² Reichert, "Feier" (note 67), 120 and 128, no. 1, 2, and 2, 2; 129, no. 1, 29; 130, no. 2, 44.

⁸³ Koch (note 11 above), 271–73; see also note 82 above.

⁸⁴ Koch (note 11), 271–73 considered a spontaneous demand of the friars or Eckhart's own decision to do so, but states: "these considerations only have the value of guesses" (273).

⁸⁵ "Christi bonus odor sumus. Et sunt tria: vitae puritas, intentionis sinceritas, opinionis aut famae odoriferae suavisitas," *LW* II, 231.11 sq. The German translation of the last element in *LW* fails to hit the sense: the opinion of the preacher in himself and his fame with the people gives a lovely scent. The whole sermon is a very elaborate construction. See the works quoted in Appendix 1, note 149.

⁸⁶ *LW* II, 234.5–11.

⁸⁷ "amati puritas, plenitudo sive copiositas, tertium est ipsius suavisitas." *LW* II, 235.2 sq.

⁸⁸ *LW* II, 243.10–245.5.

sermon is on the theme: "*Spiritus meus super mel dulcis*" ("My spirit is sweeter than honey," Sir. 24:27). It contains an interpretation relating to Christ and divine wisdom; it ends with a Marian metaphor.⁸⁹

In the *Acta Eckhardiana*, Loris Sturlese has collected and published the few extant documents that concern Meister Eckhart's activities as prior provincial. On 19 May 1305, Eckhart confirms a document by which the abbess and the convent of the Cistercian nuns at Gotha, the Abbey of the Holy Cross, received land from the late "*Eckhardus Miles dictus de Hochheim*."⁹⁰ On 11 September of the same year, he wrote a letter to the city council of Göttingen, where a Dominican priory had existed since 1296, ratifying and confirming the promise made by the friars in the city that they will not extend their real estate beyond the present limits without the knowledge and assent of the city council.⁹¹ On 11 March 1306, Brother John de Bosco, prior of Minden, acting by a special mandate of the provincial of Saxony (Saxonia) received permission from Bishop Godefried de Waldeck, bishop of Minden, to move the Dominican nuns' convent from the insecure place called "Lahde" to the city of Lemgo, and for the estate of the sisters be sold to the Cistercian abbey of Loccum.⁹² In a lengthy document, issued on 19 April of the same year, the prioress and nuns of this monastery sold their estate with the assurance that they deliberate with "*Magistro Ecgehardo, provinciali ordinis predicatorum*" and others on this case.⁹³ We do not know whether Eckhart himself or other friars would have procured a papal letter of protection for the Dominican nuns of Blankenburg in Bremen diocese.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ *LW* II, 259–68.

⁹⁰ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 11, 162 sq.

⁹¹ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 13, 164. In many cities the local authorities feared that the mendicant friars would try to buy estates in the neighborhood of their priories and thus create new "monastery immunities" exempt from the city rules and taxes. See Andreas Rüther, *Bettelorden in Stadt und Land: die Straßburger Mendikantenkonvente und das Elsaß im Spätmittelalter* (Berlin: 1997), 77 and 226–37; Marianne Gechter, "Die Auseinandersetzungen um den Grund- und Rentenbesitz der Dominikaner im 14. Jahrhundert"; Walter Senner, *Blühende Gelehrsamkeit: eine Ausstellung zur Gründung des Generalstudiums der Dominikaner in Köln vor 750 Jahren* (Köln: 1998), 34–39.

⁹² *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 14, 165. On the Lahde monastery see Wilms (note 48 above), 92 sq.

⁹³ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 15, 166–68; the quotation is on 167.11 sq. The text reflects somewhat the sadness in having to leave a beloved place: "nos advertentes quod non nisi in tranquillitate pacis bene colitur auctor pacis (166.10)...qualiter de Loddhe tamquam persecutionem patientes in aliam civitatem iuxta verbum domini ewangelicum fugeremus" (167.13–15). This may be a reflection of Meister Eckhart's counselling using an allusion to Matt. 10:23.

⁹⁴ Wilms (note 48), 97.

On 18 April 1307, just before the general chapter at Strasbourg, the dukes Henry and Albert of Brunswick gave permission to the Dominicans to buy an estate in that city and to establish a priory there.⁹⁵ They donated the house of their steward on 5 August.⁹⁶ Indeed, this steward sold what was in his possession to them on 17 August.⁹⁷

The first prior provincial of the province of Bohemia, Fr Zdislav (Aegidius), who had been provincial of Polonia from 1279 to 1291 and 1294 to 1301,⁹⁸ had been absolved by the general chapter in 1304⁹⁹—probably because of his old age. That in the following year the reunification of Polonia and the Bohemia was initiated,¹⁰⁰ cannot however be taken as a positive sign—even less that in 1305 it was forbidden to send foreign students to the *studium generale* in Bohemia until the master of the order would allow it again.¹⁰¹ The general chapter in 1307, composed of the provincials, deposed the unnamed succeeding provincial of Bohemia¹⁰² and appointed Meister Eckhart, who was present at the chapter as the general vicar of the Bohemian province in addition to his normal duties as provincial of Saxony. The text is unusually specific:

As we have heard much that is worthy of investigation and correction about the Province of *Bohemia*, we install and order Brother Aycard, Provincial of *Saxony*, <to be> our general vicar in the said province of *Bohemia*, giving him plenary power in the head as well as in the members, in all as well as every single <friar>, even if about those things a special report would

⁹⁵ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 17, 169. On the relationship between city and monasteries in general, see Edith Ennen: *Die europäische Stadt des Mittelalters* (Göttingen: 1987), 252–55.

⁹⁶ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 19, 170. This document is also printed in *Mecklenburgisches Urkundenbuch*, vol. 25A: Nachträge 1166–1400 (Schwerin: 1936), 67, no. 13844.

⁹⁷ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 20, 171. The long duration until the final realization of this project (see further below) shows how difficult the foundation of a new priory had become. On the procedure from the first initiative until the final establishment and recognition of a Dominican priory in that time see Isnard Frank, “Das Retzer Martyrologium,” *Xenia medii aevi historiam illustrantia oblata Thomae Kaeppli*, vol. 1, ed. Raymundus Creytens and Pius Künzle, *Storia e letteratura* 141 (Rome: 1978), 269–97, see 271–73.

⁹⁸ *ACG* (note 50), 2, 1, no. 1; Vladimír Koudelka, “Zur Geschichte der böhmischen Dominikanerprovinz im Mittelalter, I Provinzialprioren, Inquisitoren, Apostolische Poenitentiare,” *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 25 (1955), 5–74, see 76 sq.

⁹⁹ *ACG* (note 50), 2, 6.8, without negative connotation. Meister Eckhart was a member of the chapter.

¹⁰⁰ *ACG* (note 50), 2, 9.11–13. This initiative was not supported by the *diffinitores* of the following chapter.

¹⁰¹ *ACG* (note 50), 2, 13.33–36; this limitation hit the *studia generalia* of Hungaria and Polonia as well.

¹⁰² *ACG* (note 50), 2, 25.27; Koudelka (note 98), 76 sq.

have to be delivered, so that he may order and dispose as it seems adequate to him.¹⁰³

This gave Eckhart full power, even in those cases where a vicar would normally have had to report to the chapter. This included the right to depose superiors of houses. There must have been a dramatic situation that required immediate action—Vladimir Koudelka supposed a fight “between two parties, each of which tried to seize power in the province.”¹⁰⁴ Eckhart seemingly accomplished his mission with some success, since during the next two years we do not read anything negative about Bohemia in the acts of the general chapters. A new provincial was elected in 1308. In 1310, however, when Eckhart as provincial was presumably at the general chapter again, we read in the acts that the definitors at the Bohemian provincial chapter of 1308 would have harshly sanctioned those friars who had tried to complain to the master general and the general chapter about abuses. The unnamed provincial was commissioned to inquire about the truth of such reports and—in the event of it being confirmed—“to punish the *diffinitores* and anybody else who continued to act in this matter so severely that nobody would dare to attempt something like this further on.”¹⁰⁵ This seems not to have worked well, because in 1311 the general chapter, now of *diffinitores*, deposed the provincial and imposed the former provincial, Fr Zdislav, at that time prior of Hradec Králové, as vicar general.¹⁰⁶ Fr Zdislav was elected prior provincial a year later, but this was not the end of the troubles in the Bohemia province.¹⁰⁷ As soon as Eckhart had departed Bohemia the old conflicts arose once again.

In 1307 the general chapter at Strasbourg, with Meister Eckhart in attendance, discharged in Teutonia province the priors of Strasbourg, Krems, Frankfurt, Würzburg, Louvain, Neustadt, Rottweil, Speyer, Tulln, Worms, Freiburg, and Weissenburg without giving any reason,¹⁰⁸ and the priors of

¹⁰³ “Cum multa digna examinacione et correctione audiverimus de provincia Boemie, statuimus et ordinamus fratrem Aycardum provincialem Saxonie nostrum vicarium generalem in dicta provincia Boemie, dantes sibi plenariam potestatem tam in capite quam in membris, in omnibus et singulis, eciamsi de hiis oporteret fieri mencionem specialem, ut ipse ordinet et disponat, secundum quod sibi videbitur expedire” *ACG* (note 50), 2, 28.1–6.

¹⁰⁴ Koudelka (note 98), 77.

¹⁰⁵ *ACG* (note 50), 2, 49.8–19, quote ll. 17–19; Koudelka (note 98), 77.

¹⁰⁶ *ACG* (note 50), 2, 53.3, rather negative, as a vicarius generalis is installed: l. 29.

¹⁰⁷ Koudelka (note 98), 77 sq.

¹⁰⁸ *ACG* (note 50), 2, 25.28–31. That those depositions were sanctions is clear from the formulation: “ordinamus quod priores absoluti isto anno in eisdem conventibus vel provinciis nullatenus resumantur” *ACG* (note 50), 2, 25. 31 sq.

Augsburg and Ulm as penalty for not caring for the proper clothing of the friars.¹⁰⁹ The prior provincial, however, was not discharged. We have not discovered any complaints about the province of Saxony.

In January 1308 the knight Ludolphus, Alderman of Groningen, donated an estate in this latter city to the Dominicans, the beginning of the foundation of a new priory.¹¹⁰ We learn from an entry in the chronicle of the Dortmund priory that a new foundation must have existed there for some time. In 1309, presumably on 26 May, Emperor Henry VII, on request of the provincial, that is, by Meister Eckhart, gave his assent to the building of a Dominican house at Dortmund.¹¹¹ Shortly afterwards, on 23 June, Meister Eckhart was at Brunswick and promised the city council not to continue the building of Brunswick priory until a papal permission had arrived and even then not to construct anything that could be detrimental to the city.¹¹² This shows the reserve towards the friars on the part of many cities. To gain permission for a new foundation, the provincial had to overcome this negative attitude. The provincial gained papal permission for the planned foundations in Brunswick for 60 friars, and in Dortmund and Groningen for 30 friars, from Pope Clemens V from Avignon on 23 January 1310.¹¹³ This does not necessarily imply that Eckhart would have been at the papal court at that time. At the general chapter of the same year, the order agreed to the new priories in the usual form.¹¹⁴ We have a notice in the conventual chronicle¹¹⁵ about the actual sending of the first six friars by the provincial to Dortmund in that same year.

The general chapter on Pentecost 1310, with Eckhart present, relieved the prior provincial of *Teutonia*, Johannes Picardi of Lichtenberg, from

¹⁰⁹ *ACG* (note 50), 2, 26.12 sq.

¹¹⁰ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 22, 172.

¹¹¹ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 24, 173 see note 4. As this is from a local chronicle it cannot be used as a negative prejudice against the Braunschweig and Groningen projects. Sturlese (see note 2) refers to a lost document (presumably destroyed by bombing in World War II), which states that the priest Everhard Vrijdag, a friend of the Dominicans, had bought an estate and that friars had already arrived there, but were not well received by the citizens. The document on the acquisition by Vrijdag in the name of the provincial, dated 25 July 1309, is preserved: see *Acta Echardiana*, no. 26, 174 sq.

¹¹² *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 25, 174.

¹¹³ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 28, 176. The number of friars indicates a maximum, showing that Brunswick was probably intended to receive a somewhat more important *studium*. The papal permission generally was not needed, but in this case it was demanded by the Brunswick city council.

¹¹⁴ "Concedimus provincie Saxonie tres domos, cum licentiam habeant a summo pontifice." *ACG* (note 50), 2, 49, 5 sq.; see *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 30, 177.

¹¹⁵ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 29, 177.

this office and sent him to Paris to graduate as *magister*,¹¹⁶ Dietrich of Freiberg was installed vicar until the election and confirmation of a new provincial.¹¹⁷ Consequently, when the provincial chapter at Speyer elected Meister Eckhart prior provincial in the fall of 1310,¹¹⁸ he did not immediately take over this office. The general chapter at Naples in 1311, however, relieved him from the office of provincial of Saxony and sent him once again to Paris to teach.¹¹⁹ This was a very unusual measure. The reason may have been that the absence in Paris of Dominican *magistri* and *baccalaurei* during terms had caused problems and now somebody was needed who could make sure that “our order will <not> be despised” as the general chapter had it the year before¹²⁰ and had repeated in 1311.¹²¹ There must have been a grave disturbance that necessitated this insistence. Berengarius de Landorra at Paris, who held the chair for non-French province Dominicans since 1308, had been elected provincial of his home province, Toulouse, in 1310, and even before this he had been

¹¹⁶ “Absolvimus priorem provincialem Theutonie, quia mittimus eum Parisius ad recipiendum magisterium in sacra theologia,” *ACG* (note 50), 2, 48.33 sq. On Johannes Picardi de Lichtenberg see *SOP* (note 40), 2, 527.

¹¹⁷ “Ponimus vicarium in provincia Theutonie fr. Theodoricum, magistrum in theologia, donec provincialis eiusdem provincie electus fuerit et confirmatus et presens extiterit in eadem.” *ACG* (note 50), 2, 50.22–24. The insistence that the vicar should remain in office until the new provincial would be confirmed and then begin his office is normal.

¹¹⁸ “<Capitulum provinciale> A. D. 1310 in Spira. Hic electus fuit magister Echardus <in> provincialem, sed cassata fuit electio.” Johannes Meyer <List of *Teutonia* provincial chapters> Basel UB, Ms. E III 13, fol. 136v: Paulus von Loë, *Statistisches über die Ordensprovinz Teutonia*, (Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens in Deutschland) 1 (Leipzig: 1907), 33, about this list see 11 sq. In the oldest catalogue of Teutonia provincials, Stuttgart Landesbibliothek Cod. hist. 4° 237, fol. 257–68 (shortly after 1340) we read: “Fr. Johannes de Leichtenberg, magister in theologia, eligitur Antwerpie MCCCVIII: prefuit uno anno et ad episcopatum assumitur; post quem Echardus, vir sanctus, magister in theologia, eligitur sed non confirmatur.” See 24.

¹¹⁹ “Absolvimus priores provinciales Saxonie et mittimus eum Parisius ad legendum; Boemie et Terre sancte, Romane provincie.” *ACG* (note 50), 2, 53.17 sq. No reason is given for the discharge of the other provincials. “Ioannes de Busco, prior Sosaciensis” (Soest) was installed as *vicarius generalis* “in provincia Saxonie” *ACG* (note 50), 2, 53.27, 31.

¹²⁰ “Cum ex absentatione magistrorum in theologia et bacalareorum a Parisiensi studio defectus multi contingant, ex quibus apud extraneos notam incurrimus et ordo noster devenit in contemptum, volumus et ordinamus, quod nullus magistrorum actu legencium seu quicumque bacalarii ab ipso Parisiensi studio aliquatenus se absentent nec in ullo regiminis officio occupentur nec in generalibus studiis nisi pro notabili et evidenti defectu ad legendum ponantur.” *ACG* (note 50), 2, 45.29–46.3.

¹²¹ “[almost verbatim as in previous note]... modo et forma in predicto capitulo ordinatis, volumus et inviolabiliter observari; et imponimus, ut in posterum sic observentur, ne per aliorum oblivionem seu negligenciam amodo oporteat replicari.” *ACG* (note 50), 2, 53.11–13.

very busy with various commissions.¹²² His successor Johannes Picardi of Lichtenberg was not different in this respect and was elevated bishop of Regensburg by Pope Clemens V on 4 April 1311; the cathedral chapter meanwhile had an elected bishop, but Johannes did not return to his chair—the last news we hear from him is as counselor from a diplomatic mission of the German emperor in 1311–13.¹²³ This clearly created a difficult situation for the presence of Dominicans, and especially the foreign Dominicans at the University of Paris. At this time, the process against the Templar Order of Knights arranged by Pope Clement V on demand of the French king Philip the Fair was a big issue that also involved the Faculty of Theology¹²⁴ and the Dominicans. After the Dominican general chapter at Naples in 1311, the master general, Aymericus de Placentia, resigned. He had been commissioned by Pope Clement V with the examination of the Knights Templar and had found them innocent. He was not willing to be implicated any further in the process.¹²⁵ In this situation at Paris, there was a need for a friar who could assure the academic reputation of the order by continuous teaching of high quality. This friar was Meister Eckhart. He could also handle the difficult diplomatic situation that involved the order in relations with both the pope and the king of France. One can consider it as a great distinction that he was sent to Paris to teach as master of theology for a second time. Still, the motive was not to honor Meister Eckhart; the appointment instead reflected the need to have an excellent man in an exposed position at a difficult time.

The 1311 general chapter is also remarkable in regard to arrangements concerning lectors. Instead of the usual commission by the master of the order, the personnel for Paris were chosen by the chapter itself. Besides Meister Eckhart as regent master, one has “*fr. Theodoricus de provincial Saxonie*” to lecture on the *Sentences* and—a unique measure—“*pro biblia legenda fr. Jacobus de Lausana*.”¹²⁶ A *magister regens* for the *Francia* chair

¹²² On Berengarius, who was elected master general of the Dominican order in 1312, see *SOP* (note 40), 1, 191 sq.; Mortier (note 69), 477–79.

¹²³ *SOP* (note 40), 2, 527.

¹²⁴ The king had asked for an expert opinion on the case which the faculty delivered devoutly on 25 March 1308: *CUP* (note 5), no. 664, 2, 125–28; see no. 666, 2, 129 sq.

¹²⁵ Mortier (note 69), 2, 465–70. Recently, the so-called “Chinon parchment” and other documents relating to this process have been found in the Archivio Segreto Vaticano (Archivum Arcis, Armarium D 217 + 218; see Barbara Frale: “1308. Il piano di Clemente V per salvaguardare l’Ordine dei Templari,” 1308, *Eine Topographie historischer Gleichzeitigkeit*, ed. Andreas Speer & David Wirmer, (Berlin, 2010), *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 35, 123–139.

¹²⁶ “Assignamus ad legendum Parisius sentencias fr. Theodoricum de provincia Saxonie. Item. Providemus eidem studio pro biblia legenda de fr. Iacobo de Lausana” *ACG* (note 50),

is not mentioned. From a collection of *Quaestiones* by or for the use of the Augustinian Prosper de Regio (Reggio Emilia) we learn that in 1311–12 it was Laurentius Brito.¹²⁷ For 1312–13 Fr Johannes de Prato is designated to lecture on the *Sentences* with the reserve: “as far as this is up to us.”¹²⁸ The choice of the lectors and bachelors for the other *studia generalia* was delegated to the provincials or their vicars, respectively to the *diffinitores* of the provincial chapters of those provinces where such *studia* were situated.¹²⁹ That those decisions were made is due in the first place to the resignation of Aymericus de Placentia as master of the order, which was accepted by the chapter.¹³⁰ However, the choice of a friar from among Eckhart’s confidants at least as *baccalaureus Sententiarum*, certainly not against his wish, was a sign of special esteem for him. Theodoricus Saxo, known only from this reference, was still a bachelor in Paris in 1314.¹³¹ Benedict Reichert, the editor of the *Acta*, seems to confuse him with Dietrich of Freiberg,¹³² but it can safely be excluded that a *magister* would return to Paris to serve as *baccalaureus*—and that Dietrich would have criticized the aberration from Thomas Aquinas’s doctrine by Durandus.¹³³

2, 55.11–14 On Theodoricus Saxo—to be distinguished from Dietrich of Freiberg—see *SOP* (note 40), 4, 307 sq. On Jacobus de Lausanna, member of the French province, see *ibid.*, 2, 323–29; *LThK* (note 148), 5 (1996), 728.

¹²⁷ Auguste Pelzer: “Prosper de Reggio Emilia, des Ermites de Saint-Augustin et le manuscrit latin 1086 de la Bibliothèque Vaticane,” *Revue de philosophie néoscholastique* 30 (1928), 316–351, see 339—mistaken for the Benedictin Laurentius Anglicus (Glorieux, *Répertoire*, note 40, no. 377, 2, 272) or for Laurentius de Pollengio (Glorieux, *Répertoire*, note 40, no. 383, 2, 280); Palémon Glorieux, “A propos de ‘Vatic. Lat. 1086’: le personnel enseignant de Paris vers 1311–14,” *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 5 (1933), 23–39, see 33. See *SOP* (note 40), 3, 65.

¹²⁸ *ACG* (note 50), 2, 55.15 sq. “Quantum nostra interest” because it is up to the next general chapter to finally decide. On Johannes de Prato (Normandy), who in 1314 was also a member of the Durandus commission, *magister* in 1318, died as bishop of Évreux ca. 1328–33, see *SOP* (note 40), 4, 169.

¹²⁹ *ACG* (note 50), 2, 55.17–19.

¹³⁰ *ACG* (note 50), 2, 55.20 sq.; William Aquinas Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, 2 vols [of 4 planned], vol. 1 (New York: 1966–73), 224.

¹³¹ *SOP* (note 40), 4, 307 sq., no. 3686.

¹³² *ACG* (note 50), 2, 55 note 1, points to an earlier reference to Dietrich of Freiberg, but gives reference to “Theodoricus Saxo” according to Jacobus Quetif and Jacobus Echard, *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum*, vol. 1 (Paris: 1719), 513a–b. Theodoricus Saxo is discerned by Quetif-Echard from “Theodoricus Teuto” (*Ibid.*, 510a–511a, i.e. Dietrich of Freiberg), but he has “Theodoricus Saxo” as Meister Eckhart’s successor as provincial of Saxonia until 1311 (513a) and have him as author of *De radialibus impressionibus*, which in fact is a work by Dietrich of Freiberg, see *SOP* (note 40), 4, 315, no. 3711.

¹³³ Kurt Flasch, *Dietrich von Freiberg: Philosophie, Theologie, Naturforschung um 1300* (Frankfurt am Main: 2007), does not see a closer relation with Durandus’ doctrine (see e.g. 299); their common point is their anti-thomism (54 sq.).

Durandus de S. Porciano held his *principium* in the summer of 1312¹³⁴ and was *magister* on the chair for friars of the French province in 1312/13 when he was appointed *lector sacri palatii* (master of the sacred [papal] palace, that is, teacher and theological expert of the papal court). This sign of pontifical esteem did not hold back the Dominican order from installing a commission of learned Parisian Dominicans in 1314 to evaluate his commentary on the *Sentences*,¹³⁵ which was considered not to be Thomistic.

The 1312 general chapter, as usual at Pentecost and its octave, appointed Johannes de Prato of the French province to lecture on the *Sentences*.¹³⁶ In 1313 it was Guillelmus de Lauduno,¹³⁷ while Jacobus de Lausanna was designated for the following year. The 1314 general chapter appointed Jacobus de Lausanna (from *Francia*) to lecture on the *Sentences* and designated Matthaeus de Ursinis from the Roman province for the next year.¹³⁸ In July 1314, just after the three-year turn of Meister Eckhart, the already mentioned commission for the examination of Durandus S. Porciano's commentary on the *Sentences*¹³⁹ proposed its result. From the prologue we learn that the members were (the order is by precedence):¹⁴⁰

¹³⁴ Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 70, 1, 214; Glorieux, A propos (note 127), 33; *SOP* (note 40), 1, 339; James E. Weisheipl in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. (Detroit: 2003; henceforth *NCE2*) 4, 947b–949a.

¹³⁵ *SOP* (note 40), 4, 307 sq., no. 3686.

¹³⁶ *ACG* (note 50), 2, 62.17 sq.; see *SOP* (note 40), 4, 168. In 1314 he was a member of the Durandus committee.

¹³⁷ *ACG* (note 50), 2, 69.1–4. Guillelmus de Lauduno is unknown to Kaeppli-Panella *SOP* (note 40). Quetif-Echard (note 132), 1, 637b–639b, see 639a, proved sermons ascribed to him earlier as works of Guillelmus de Lugduno (G. Peraldus see *SOP*, note 40, 2, 143–47, no. 1623). In 1305–09 he was provincial of the Dominican “provincia Povinciae” (638a–b), sent to Paris as *baccalaureus* he was elected provincial anew in 1314, and promoted *magister* on 13 June 1314 on mandate of Pope Clement V (638b). In 1317 Pope John XXII made him *Magister Sacri Palatii* and in 1321 archbishop of Vienne, and in 1327 he was moved to Toulouse and created cardinal (638b).

¹³⁸ *ACG* (note 50), 2, 75.4–7; concerning Matthaeus de Ursinis, Kaeppli-Panella *SOP* (note 40) knows only Romanus de Ursinis, the successor of Thomas Aquinas in 1272, who died on 28 May 1273 (3, 332 sq.); 5, 168. In 1315 Matthaeus was appointed (*ACG*, note 50, 2, 86.16 sq.). Denifle (*CUP* note 5, no. 714, 2, 172, note 1), reporting the same decision communicates that he was sent to Paris as a student by the Roman provincial chapter in 1306, received the licence around 1316, was elected Roman provincial in 1323, appointed “lector sacrae pagine Romae pro clero Romano” by Pope John XXII in August 1326 and bishop of Agrigento in October of the same year; he was finally created cardinal in September 1327.

¹³⁹ See above note 44.

¹⁴⁰ On precedence and its criteria in the Dominican Order see Walter Senner, “Meister Eckharts Straßburger Ordensauftrag,” *Meister-Eckhart-Jahrbuch* 2 (2008), 17–35, see 25.

Position	From the French Province	From other provinces
Magistri	Herveus Natalis, Mag. 1307 ¹⁴¹ Ivo Cadomen<sis>, Mag. 1312 ¹⁴² Petrus de Palude, Mag. 1314 ¹⁴⁴	Johannes de Parma, Mag. 1313 ¹⁴³
Baccalaurei		Johannes de Neapoli ¹⁴⁵ Theodoricus Saxo
	Johannes de Prato	
Bacc. Bibliae	Jacobus de Lausanna	
	Uncertain of which province:	Ivo Leonen<sis> ¹⁴⁶

Meister Eckhart is absent from this list because his immediate successor, Johannes de Parma, was already in office and he himself most likely left Paris after the end of the term (29 June). His *baccalaureus* Theodoricus Saxo, however, was still present. Nevertheless, these are the colleagues with whom Meister Eckhart worked in Paris during his second period as *magister*: Herveaus Natalis, who was provincial, and perhaps John of Naples, who presumably had just arrived in order to graduate, did not teach.

Among the masters of other schools we have the Franciscans: perhaps Jacobus de Aesculo (*magister* ca. 1309–11, afterwards “superior Germaniae”),¹⁴⁷ more likely Bertrandus de la Tour (mag. ca. 1311–12, cardinal 1320, †1332),¹⁴⁸ and Martinus de Abbatisvilla (mag. ca. 1312–14).¹⁴⁹ Perhaps, Michael of Cesena, the later *Minister generalis* of the Franciscan order, and indicted later at Avignon when Eckhart was on trial, is attested

¹⁴¹ In 1309–18 he was provincial of France, and in 1318–23 he was master of the order: see *SOP* (note 40), 2, 231–44.

¹⁴² Yves de Caen: Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 68, 1, 212; Glorieux, A propos (note 127), 33 and 36 sq.; Yvo de Cadomo: *SOP* (note 40), 4, 485–87.

¹⁴³ Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 71, 1, 221; *SOP* (note 40), 3, 524 sq.; 4, 166 sq.

¹⁴⁴ *SOP* (note 40), 3, 243–49; 4, 234; *LThK3* (note 148), 8 (1999), 134.

¹⁴⁵ In 1298–1300 he was a student at Bologna, before teaching at Naples and studying at Paris, in 1315 he became *magister*, and 1317 *magister regens studii generalis* at Naples: *SOP* (note 40), 2, 495–98; 4, 163 sq.; Palémon Glorieux in *NCE2* (note 134), 7, 976b sq. It is likely that Johannes de Neapoli just had just returned to Paris for graduation, the 1312–14 general chapters having committed the choice of *magistri* to the master general and appointing *ad legendum Sententias* only.

¹⁴⁶ Nothing more is known of him. *SOP* (note 40), 4, 487 has him come from Saint-Pol de Léon in Brittany, so he would presumably be a member of the French province.

¹⁴⁷ Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 348, 2, 236; Glorieux, A propos (note 127), 34; *LThK3* (note 148), 5 (1996), 722; F. Accrocca in *Dictionnaire d'histoire et géographie ecclésiastiques*, vol. 26 (Paris: 1997), 621 sq. (quote); *BBKL* (note 44), 16 (Herzberg: 1999), 793.

¹⁴⁸ Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 349, 2, 238; Glorieux, A propos (note 127), 33 sq.; *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* 3 (henceforth: *LThK3*) vol. 2 (1994), 296.

¹⁴⁹ Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 346, 2, 232; Glorieux, A propos (note 127), 34.

as *baccalaureus* ca. 1314–15 (mag. 1316).¹⁵⁰ We also do not know whether he would have met the Franciscan tertiary *magister* Raimundus Lullus who was in Paris from 1309 to 1311.¹⁵¹ Lull was not a regent master but was much discussed and was found orthodox by a solemn declaration of the Faculty of Theology.¹⁵² Equally, it is not clear whether Meister Eckhart would have met the Cistercian master Jacobus Fournier (mag. ca. 1309–11) who was elected abbot in 1311, created a cardinal in 1327, and became Pope Benedict XII in 1334,¹⁵³ later in Avignon, Jacobus surely knew him when he wrote a *votum* on Eckhart's incriminated propositions.

From the Augustinians we have Gregorius de Lucca (mag. 1309–12),¹⁵⁴ Amadeus de Castello (mag. c.1307–c.1314),¹⁵⁵ and Prosper de Regio (Reggio Emilia, *bacc.* 1311, mag. 1316) who had collected the most precious information about the masters at the Faculty of Theology and their disputes in 1311–14.¹⁵⁶ Carmelites were Simon de Corbeia (1309–12 or 1313)¹⁵⁷ and Guido Terreni (also Guido Anglicus, Guy Terrè, mag. 1312–18, then general prior and bishop in 1321), disciple of Godefridus de Fontibus.¹⁵⁸ Sibertus de Beka, who was *baccalaureus* before 1306, was probably in Paris also. He was elected prior at Geldern in 1312 and returned to Paris to be promoted *magister* ca. 1316;¹⁵⁹ Eckhart will meet him at the trial in Cologne.¹⁶⁰ Johannes de Monte (mag. c.1307–c.1318)¹⁶¹ represented the Augustinian Canons Regular of Mont. S. Éloi, and Johannes de Valle (mag. 1310–c.1318)¹⁶² was from the regular canons community *Vallis scholarum*.

¹⁵⁰ Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 347, 2, 233; *BBKL* (note 44) 5 (Herzberg: 1993), 1453–56; *LThK3* (note 148), 7 (1998), 233; J. Cambell in *NCE2* (note 134), 9, 599a–600a.

¹⁵¹ Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 335, 2, 145; *BBKL* (note 44), 5 (Herzberg: 1993), 423–30; *LThK3* (note 148), 8 (1999), 810–12; F.A. Yates in *NCE2* (note 134), 8, 866a–867a.

¹⁵² *CUP* (note 5), no. 679, 2, 140 sq.

¹⁵³ Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 370, 2, 265; *BBKL* (note 44), 1 (Hamm: 1990), 486 sq.; *LThK3* (note 148), 2 (1994), 207 sq. Guy Mollat in *NCE2* (note 134), 2, 243a–244b.

¹⁵⁴ Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 407, 2, 318; Glorieux, A propos (note 127), 34.

¹⁵⁵ Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 408, 2, 319; Glorieux, A propos (note 127), 34.

¹⁵⁶ Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 411, 2, 328; Glorieux, A propos (note 127), *passim*; see also Pelzer (note 127).

¹⁵⁷ Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 421, 2, 338; Glorieux, A propos (note 127), 34.

¹⁵⁸ Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 422, 2, 339; Glorieux, A propos (note 127), 34; *DHGE* (note 147), 22 (1988), 1291 sq.; *LThK3* (note 148), 4 (1995), 1097.

¹⁵⁹ Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 423, 2, 344; *BBKL* (note 44) 5 (1995), 8–10; *LThK3* (note 148) 9 (2000), 551; D. Andreini in: *NCE2* (note 134) 13, 99b sq.

¹⁶⁰ See further below.

¹⁶¹ Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 393, 2, 288; Glorieux, A propos (note 127), 34; Roger Aubert in *DHGE* (note 147) 27 (2000), 309.

¹⁶² Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 385, 2, 281; Glorieux, A propos (note 127), 34; Roger Aubert in *DHGE* (note 147) 27 (2000), 748 sq. (note 40) no. 393, 2, 288; Glorieux, A propos (note 127), 34; Roger Aubert in *DHGE* (note 147) 27 (2000), 309.

The secular priest masters we can trace are: Henricus Amandi (mag. 1304–16),¹⁶³ Gerardus de S. Victore (mag. 1305–17),¹⁶⁴ Petrus de S. Dyonisia (mag. 1305–16),¹⁶⁵ Franciscus Caraccioli (mag. 1306–13),¹⁶⁶ Radulfus de Hotot (Rotos) (mag. 1307–20),¹⁶⁷ Johannes de Polliaco (Pouilly), pupil and successor of Godefridus de Fontibus (mag. 1307–20), and who argued against the hearing of confessions by the mendicant orders and revoked this view in 1312,¹⁶⁸ Johannes de Blaniaco (mag. 1309 or 1313–20 or 1338, afterwards bishop of Auxerre, †1345),¹⁶⁹ and an otherwise unknown master named Garin (mag. 1311–13).¹⁷⁰ Thomas de Welitona (Wylton) opposed Durandus as *baccalaureus* in 1312 and was promoted *magister* in 1316.¹⁷¹

Meister Eckhart's commentary on the Gospel according to St John could probably be a work from his second Parisian *magisterium*, but this has not been established beyond doubt.¹⁷² From this same period we have two *Quaestiones disputatae* found in a Vatican manuscript.¹⁷³ Four addi-

¹⁶³ Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 217, 1, 445; Glorieux, A propos (note 127), 35.

¹⁶⁴ Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 222, 1, 449; Glorieux, A propos (note 127), 35.

¹⁶⁵ Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 221, 1, 448; Glorieux, A propos (note 127), 35.

¹⁶⁶ Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 227, 1, 458; Glorieux, A propos (note 127), 35.

¹⁶⁷ Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 225, 1, 453; Glorieux, A propos (note 127), 35; *LThK3* (note 148), 8 (1999), 799.

¹⁶⁸ Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 223, 1, 450; Glorieux, A propos (note 127), 35; *BBKL* (note 44), 3 (Herzberg: 1992), 529 sq.; *LThK3* (note 148), 5 (1996), 958 sq.

¹⁶⁹ Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 230, 1, 464; É. Van Cauwenbergh, in *DHGE* (note 147), 9, 137 sq.

¹⁷⁰ Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 232, 1, 466; Glorieux, A propos (note 127), 35.

¹⁷¹ Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 228, 1, 460; Glorieux, A propos (note 127), 35; *BBKL* (note 44), 11 (1996), 1416; *LThK3* (note 148), 9 (2000), 1538; James A. Weisheipl in *NCE2* (note 134), 14, 39a.

¹⁷² Joseph Koch in his introduction to the critical edition (*LW III*; this fasc. 1936, xvi sq.) has nothing on a possible date. Kurt Ruh wonders "that the editors . . . even research on the whole have not considered themselves able to assign Eckhart's scriptural commentaries to his first or second *magisterium*" (*Meister Eckhart*, note 28, 29). Kurt Flasch (note 38), 265 and 271, sees the *Expositio super evangelium Sancti Johannis* rather in close connection with the *Liber Benedictus* (*Book of Divine Consolation*) ca. 1318, see also Flasch, "Meister Eckhart: Expositio sancti Evangelii secundum Ioannem [*sic*]," in *Interpretationen: Hauptwerke der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, ed. K. Flasch (Stuttgart: 1998), 381–401.

¹⁷³ Ms. Vat. lat. 1086, fol. 143r and 222r. Found by Martin Grabmann (note 54), see esp. 17–21; ed. 112–14. See Antoine Dondaine, "Praefatio," *Magistri Echaridi Opera latina* fasc. 13, (note 54), V–XI, see VI sq.; Raymond Klibansky, "Commentariolum" (note 54 above), xii–xxxv, see xxv; ed. 25–32. Bernhard Geyer, introduction in *LW V* (this fasc. 1936), 33 sq.; ed. and German transl. 72–83. On the ms. Pelzer: Prosper (note 127), 337; Glorieux: A propos (note 127), 33 and 35 sq.; *Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae codices manu scripti . . . Augustus Pelzer: Codices Vaticani Latini*, 2, 1 (Vatican City: 1931), 654–83.

tional *quaestiones*,¹⁷⁴ which until recently have been unanimously considered as inauthentic, have been proposed genuine works recently by Markus Vincent.¹⁷⁵

In 1313 Johannes of Parma was promoted *magister* and succeeded Meister Eckhart on the chair for external (non-French) Dominicans.¹⁷⁶ On 14 April 1314 we find the Meister a witness in a transaction concerning the Dominicans at Strasbourg.¹⁷⁷ As the circumstances are somewhat extraordinary, we will take a closer look at this document. Katharina and Adelheidis Engelberti, daughters of Johannes Engelberti, made a bequest (*legatum*) for the benefit of the Dominican Hugo, their brother: after their death the rent from their house shall be for his use as long as he lives and afterwards the estate shall become the property of the Strasbourg Dominican priory.¹⁷⁸ In case the conditions linked with this bequest would not be observed the house should become property of the cathedral.¹⁷⁹ This is as usual made up and authenticated by the judge of the diocesan curia, but—quite extraordinarily—the person acting for the recipient of the bequest is not the *procurator* (bursar) of the priory but the provincial of the Dominicans who seals on the expressed will of the donors together with the judge of the curia.¹⁸⁰ Five high-ranking Dominicans are named as witnesses: (1) Wernher, auxiliary bishop at Strasbourg, appointed from the

¹⁷⁴ In the same Ms. Vat. lat. 1086, fol. 222v–224r; ed. Grabmann (note 54); *Opera latina* fasc. 13 (note 54), 32–43; Magistri Echardi *Opera latina* fasc. 13 (note 54), 32–43. On criticism, see the indications in the previous note.

¹⁷⁵ At the annual convention of the “Meister-Eckhart-Gesellschaft” at Munich on 11 March 2010. Meanwhile the authenticity is proven. Edited in *LW V* by Loris Sturlese, Latin–English edited by Markus Vinzent, and Latin–German edited by Walter Senner (forthcoming).

¹⁷⁶ See above.

¹⁷⁷ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 38, 182–84.

¹⁷⁸ “quod ipsis sororibus solum simplex usus et habitatio dicte domus et aree remaneat, quamdiu vixerint.” (Ibid., 182.13 sq.) “quidquid provenerit annis singulis ex eisdem idem frater Hugo recipiat pro suis necessitatibus et oportunitatibus relevandis temporibus vite sue, ipso autem fratre Hugone viam universe carnis ingresso domus et area prenotate pleno iure et proprietatis titulo necnon utili et directo dominio absque exceptione ad priorem et conventum fratrum ordinis predicatorum in Argentina libere devolvantur et ad conventum eundem pertineant absolute” (182.18–183.24). For the background on this transaction, see Senner, “Meister Eckharts Straßburger Ordensauftrag” (note 140), 22–25.

¹⁷⁹ “mandantes et ordinantes quod, si quispiam prelatorum vel auctoritatem in dicto ordine predicatorum habentium ipsum fratrem Hugonem, ipsarum germanum, directe vel indirecte quomodolibet impediret quominus teneret domum eandem iuxta modum predictum, extunc ipsa domus pleno iure transeat ad opus fabrice beate Virginis in Argentina simpliciter et etiam absolute...” (Ibid., 183.45–48).

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 183.54–58.

order; (2) "Magister Eckhart, professor of sacred theology";¹⁸¹ (3) Mattheus, prior at Strasbourg; (4) Petrus, prior at Colmar; and (5) Egno de Stoffen (ex-provincial).¹⁸² The donors evidently were anxious to secure as authoritative a representation of the Dominicans as possible.¹⁸³ The Dominicans were interested in that particular estate in order to consolidate their property against fierce resistance from the city authorities.¹⁸⁴ The order of the witnesses is not by chance but according to precedence: first the bishop, then Eckhart, who evidently was not under the jurisdiction of the Strasbourg or of the Colmar prior at that time but was higher in rank than they were. This cannot be founded on his being a *magister*, who was under the jurisdiction of his local prior and lower in precedence. Rather, it implies a function as either vicar of the master general of the order or as vicar of the provincial of the province of Teutonia.

According to the second document which we have about his presence in Strasbourg, Eckhart on this occasion acts as vicar of the master general. On 13 November 1316 the widow of the knight Fritzemann of Schafftholzheim and her son Johannes gave a donation to the nuns Ellina and Agnes of the Dominican convent of St Mark.¹⁸⁵ The document is set up by the judge of the diocesan curia and is testified by the knight Reinboldus (Hüffelin), Johannes, and the donors. It is specified that the prioress of the two nuns and brother Eckhart, vicar of the master general, have given permission.¹⁸⁶ The provincial of Teutonia, Egno de Stoffen, who had been elected in 1315 for a second time, was deposed by the general chapter at Montpellier on Pentecost 1316. He died shortly afterwards.¹⁸⁷ In September the provincial chapter at Nürnberg had elected Jacobus de Welsberg as

¹⁸¹ "presentibus testibus vocatis et rogatis . . . magistro Eckehardo, professori sacre theologie." Ibid., 183.59–184.61.

¹⁸² Ibid., 183.59–184.62.

¹⁸³ Loris Sturlese, "Meister Eckhart und die cura monialium: kritische Anmerkungen zu einem forschungsgeschichtlichen Mythos," *Meister-Eckhart-Jahrbuch* 2 (2008), 1–16, 6–8, sees the difference between the conditions of the legate and the Dominican constitutions as motive, but as I have shown (see note 178) such cases were not as rare in that time.

¹⁸⁴ Andreas Rüther, *Bettelorden in Stadt und Land: die Straßburger Mendikantenkonvente und das Elsaß im Spätmittelalter* (Berlin: 1997), 226; see above.

¹⁸⁵ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 39, 184–86.

¹⁸⁶ "moniales presentes et recipientes de licentia sue priorisse et fratris Eckehardi, vicarii magistri generalis ordinis antedicti, omne ius possessionem proprietatem et dominium . . ." Ibid., 185.38 sq.

¹⁸⁷ *ACG* (note 50), 2, 94.10. As provincial he was supposed to be present there. In the oldest list of the provincial, and also by Johannes Meyer, his death in 1316 is noted: Loë, *Statistisches . . . Teutonia* (note 118), 24 and 28, no. 23.

new provincial.¹⁸⁸ The acts of the general chapter, as they are preserved, do not contain information about the institution of vicars to replace the deposed provincial priors. This does not necessarily imply that the chapter did not decide on this issue, but it is equally possible that it was left over to the master general (in which case one would expect a commission in the acts, but this also could be due to a lack in the preserved manuscript tradition). If the general chapter rendered no decision, the prior of Nürnberg, as the superior of that priory where the next provincial chapter was to be held, would have become *vicarius provinciae*.¹⁸⁹ Lacking precise information we cannot decide whether Meister Eckhart in November 1316 was the provincial head of the Dominican province and acting by general power or whether he was acting by a special commission given to him by the master of the order. This is less ambiguous in the case of the third document from (the surroundings of) Strasbourg: dated 10 December 1322 the master general of the Dominican order, Hervaeus Natalis,¹⁹⁰ approves, ratifies, and confirms dispositions for the nuns of Unterlinden near Colmar (Alsace) made by his vicars "Eckhart, master in theology and Mattheus de Vinstingen sent after the Vienna general chapter."¹⁹¹ From the document it is clear that Eckhart and the other vicar acted on a special commission, but it cannot be excluded that this was in continuation or resumption of an earlier task.¹⁹²

Based on these three documents and on a few references in "Schwesternbücher" (legends of sisters),¹⁹³ it has become an *opinio communis* that Meister Eckhart would have been vicar of the master of the Dominican order with a special task of pastoral care for sisters and Beguines from

¹⁸⁸ Loë, *Statistisches . . . Teutonia* (note 118), 24 and 28, no. 24.

¹⁸⁹ Georgina R. Galbraith, *The Constitution of the Dominican Order: 1216 to 1360* (Manchester: 1925), 129 and 149 sq. Sturlese (note 183, 10 sq.) opts for Meister Eckhart having been *vicarius generalis* for Teutonia, installed by the Master General Berengarius de Landorra, after the general chapter in 1316. Although this is possible, it is not certain.

¹⁹⁰ On Natalis, see above, note 141. At the general chapter at Lyon in 1318 he was elected master general.

¹⁹¹ "ordinationes quas fecerunt karissimi in Christo fratres, scilicet Echardus, magister in theologia, et Mattheus de Vinstingen, ordinis nostri, in monasterio vestro infrascriptas, vicarii ex parte mea missi post generale capitulum Viennense, tenore presentium approbo, ratifico et confirmo." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 40, 186 sq.

¹⁹² See Senner, "Meister Eckharts Straßburger Ordensauftrag" (note 140), 28.

¹⁹³ Sturlese in *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 41 and 42, 187 sq., gives two examples of uncertain dates, but to my knowledge nobody has yet systematically collected such notices.

ca. 1314 to 1322.¹⁹⁴ This cannot be excluded, but it does not have sufficient evidence. Similarly—even if a sermon seems to contain a reference to Strasbourg Cathedral—we lack the evidence to place a specific part of his preaching there.¹⁹⁵ This is also true concerning his role in the conflict concerning the Beguines and Beghards that escalated at the Alsatian metropolis in the second half of the 1310s.¹⁹⁶ Some of Eckhart's sermons can be considered as recognizing the existence of the "sect of the free spirit."¹⁹⁷ However, the speculation is not justified to see in him an inquisitor who persecuted such people.¹⁹⁸ For this he would have needed a commission given not by the Dominican master general, but by the local bishop.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁴ See e.g. Koch (note 11), esp. 289; Ruh, *Meister Eckhart* (note 28), 108 sq.; Eugen Hillenbrand, "Der Straßburger Konvent der Predigerbrüder in der Zeit Eckharts," in *Meister Eckhart: Lebensstationen—Redesituationen*, ed. Klaus Jacobi, Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens NS 7 (Berlin: 1997), 151–73, passim; Marie-Anne Vannier, *Eckhart à Strasbourg* (Strasbourg: 2006), 18–20 and passim.

¹⁹⁵ "Ich sihe dat münster ane." Sermon "In omnibus requiem quaesivi" Sermon 110: *DW* IV, 2, fasc. 1 (2003), 781 sq., contains only the beginning. *Deutsche Mystiker des XIV. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Franz Pfeiffer, 1. Meister Eckhart, (Leipzig: 1857), no. XLIV, 149–52, see 150.24—but seen in context it may just be an example for an object that would not be reflected in the eye. Vannier (note 194), 27–35 is rather optimistic concerning more sermons. On the difficulties implied in attributing Eckhart's sermons to specific places and occasions see Freimut Löser: "Was sind Meister Eckharts deutsche Straßburger Predigten?" *Meister-Eckhart-Jahrbuch* 2 (2008), 37–63.

¹⁹⁶ Trusen (note 12), 19–29 and 43–54. Irmgard Kampmann: "Eckharts Predigten und die Verurteilung der freigeistigen Beginen und Begarden," *Meister-Eckhart-Jahrbuch* 2 (2008), 119–40, see 120–23 and 135.

¹⁹⁷ Especially Sermon 29 "Convalescens praecepit eis": *DW* II (1971), 73–89. For the striking references to an authentic document of the Cologne "Free Spirit" see Senner, "Meister Eckhart in Köln," in *Meister Eckhart*, ed. K. Jacobi (note 194), 207–37, see 230 sq.; Senner, "Rhineland Dominicans, Meister Eckhart, and the sect of the Free Spirit," in *The vocation of service to God and the neighbour*, ed. Joan Greatrex (Turnhout: 1998), 121–33, see 123–25 and 129–32.

¹⁹⁸ Martina Wehrli-Johns, "Mystik und Inquisition: die Dominikaner und die sogenannte Häresie des Freien Geistes," *Deutsche Mystik in abendländischem Zusammenhang: neu erschlossene Texte, neue methodische Ansätze, neue theoretische Konzepte* (Kolloquium Kloster Fischingen 1998), ed. Walter Haug (Tübingen: 2000), 223–52, esp. 243 sq.

¹⁹⁹ On the beginnings of the Dominican Inquisition in Germany, Johannes Schadelandt (1348) in Teutonia: Peter Segl, "Dominikaner und Inquisition im Heiligen Römischen Reich," in *Praedicatores Inquisitores*, ed. Wolfram Hoyer, *Dissertationes historicae* 29 (Rome: 2004), 211–48, see esp. 233–41. In Saxonia province: Walter Kerlinger (1367), see Klaus-Bernward Springer, "Dominican inquisition in the Archdiocese of Mainz (1348–1520)," in *Praedicatores Inquisitores*, vol. 1, *The Dominicans and the Mediaeval Inquisition*, (Acts of the 1st International Seminar on the Dominicans and the Inquisition, Rome, 23–25 February 2002) (Rome: 2004), 311–93, see esp. 366–68 and 387.

In a document from 12 March 1319 we learn about a conflict between a parish priest and the Dominicans at Mühlhausen in Thuringia.²⁰⁰ Fr Theodericus de Gruzin, lector of the priory there, makes an appeal to the Holy See against the judgement of the diocesan court, acting "by mandate of the religious brother Eckehard, vicar of the venerable father Hartung prior provincial of the province of Saxony of the Friars Preachers."²⁰¹ On 25 May a "fr. Eckehard" is documented as witness to a subsequent appeal of the same case. This friar evidently was a high ranking or rather old friar, as he is named directly after the prior and before the lector.²⁰²

Josef Koch discarded this document somewhat too easily without closer consideration.²⁰³ It could have been Meister Eckhart—but it need not be, as there were at least two, probably even five other German Dominicans named Eckhart.²⁰⁴ We can at least exclude the Frankfurt prior Eckhart, who at this time was the object of grave complaints. On 12 August 1320, Hervaeus Natalis as master general ordered an inquiry by Johannes de Lobiis, prior at Worms, and Philip, prior at Mainz, against him.²⁰⁵ It is hardly conceivable that Hervaeus, who knew Meister Eckhart from their time at the Parisian priory of Saint-Jacques, would have entrusted somebody who was suspected (and seemingly with reason, as in December 1320 we find another prior at Frankfurt) with the mission to the Unterlinden

²⁰⁰ *Urkundenbuch der ehemals freien Reichsstadt Mühlhausen in Thüringen*, ed. Karl Herquet, *Geschichtsquellen der Provinz Sachsen und angrenzender Gebiete* 3 (Halle: 1874), no. 748: 349–51; see Senner: "Meister Eckharts Straßburger Ordensauftrag" (note 140), 29–31.

²⁰¹ "...de mandato religiosi viri fratris Eckehardi vicarii...venerabilis patris fratris Hartungi prioris provincialis Saxonie provincie ordinis fratrum predicatorum." *Urkundenbuch...Mühlhausen* (note 200), p. 349.

²⁰² *Urkundenbuch der Erfurter Stifter und Klöster*, Teil 1 (706–1330) hrsg. von der Historischen Kommission für die Provinz Sachsen und für Anhalt, bearb. von Alfred Overmann, *Geschichtsquellen der Provinz Sachsen und des Freistaates Anhalts* N.R. 5.1 (Magdeburg: 1926), 603, no. 1093; the summary in the *Urkundenbuch* contains the error that "prior provincialis" is understood as if there would be two different persons: the (local) prior and the provincial.

²⁰³ Koch (note 11), 283 note 117. Koch was convinced that Eckhart's task as vicar in Teutonia from 1314 to 1322 excludes this. But his continuous presence there is not certain.

²⁰⁴ Walter Senner, "Meister Eckharts Straßburger Ordensauftrag" (note 140), 30 sq.

²⁰⁵ "Habui etiam delationes graves de fratre Eckardo nostro Priore apud Franckefort, et de fratre Theodorico de malis familiaritatibus et suspectis" Franciscus Jacquin: *Adminiculum conventus Ordinis Praedicatorum in libera Imperiali civitate Francofurtana sive Chronicon succinctum historico-oeconomicum*, vol. 1, ms. Frankfurt am Main, Stadtarchiv, Dominikanerkloster, Bücher, Rep. 202, publ. Hubert Koch, *Das Dominikanerkloster zu Frankfurt am Main*, (Freiburg im Breisgau: 1892), 145 sq. See Hornstein (note 11), 21 sq.; Senner: "Meister Eckharts Straßburger Ordensauftrag" (note 140), 31 sq.

nuns two years later. So as a result, the “Strasbourg decade” is less certain than it seemed.

Presumably it was in spring 1323 or at the latest sometime in 1324 that Meister Eckhart came to Cologne. It is another *opinio communis* that he was head of the Dominican *Studium generale* founded in Cologne in 1248 by Albert the Great.²⁰⁶ But this cannot be proved with certainty.²⁰⁷ The only source, which Koch considered as proof, is a passage in Eckhart’s sermon *Ave gratia plena*, delivered at the Cologne Cistercian nuns’ monastery St Mariengarten, where we read: “Yesterday in the school among the important clerics there was a disputation.”²⁰⁸ That Meister Eckhart participated in a disputation does not imply necessarily that he would have been the master conducting it: all friars in a Dominican priory were obliged to be present²⁰⁹—and he certainly did not need to hold an office to be an active participant. In the same sermon we also have “As I said in the school.”²¹⁰ This can refer to any time of Eckhart’s teaching and so it is even less of a proof. In 1323, however, Nicholas of Strasbourg

²⁰⁶ See e.g. Wilhelm Preger, *Geschichte der deutschen Mystik im Mittelalter*, Part 1 (Leipzig: 1874; repr. Aalen: 1962), 354 sq.; Koch (note 11), 303–06; Fischer (note 49), 17; Ruh, *Meister Eckhart* (note 28), 168; Loris Sturlese, “Die Kölner Eckhartisten: Das Studium generale der deutschen Dominikaner und die Beurteilung der Thesen Meister Eckharts,” *Die Kölner Universität im Mittelalter*, ed. Albert Zimmermann, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 20 (Berlin: 1989), 192–211, reprinted in Loris Sturlese, ed., *Homo divinus: philosophische Projekte in Deutschland zwischen Meister Eckhart und Heinrich Seuse* (Stuttgart: 2007), 119–35 (quotations are from this edition), see 120, is somewhat more cautious: “a connection with the activities of the *Studium* ... has to be considered as most likely” [my translation]. E. Colledge, “Introduction,” in *Meister Eckhart* (note 33), 10: “in Cologne, where, though the evidence is not strong, he seems to have acted as master of the more advanced students,” seems to mix up the function of the *lector principalis* with the *magister studentium*, see Appendix 1 in this volume. That Eckhart would have come to Cologne to teach there already in 1320 is an assumption without any evidence: *Chronik zur Geschichte der Stadt Köln*, vol. 1, *Von den Anfängen bis 1400*, ed. Peter Fuchs (Köln: 1999), 263a.

²⁰⁷ The first to doubt this was Isnard Frank, “Zur Studienorganisation der Dominikanerprovinz Teutonia in der ersten Hälfte des 14. Jahrhunderts und zum Studiengang des Seligen Heinrich Seuse OP,” in *Heinrich Seuse: Studien zum 600. Todestag 1366–1966*, ed. Ephrem M. Filthaut (Köln: 1966), 39–70, see 67; detailed in Walter Senner, *Johannes von Sterngassen OP und sein Sentenzenkommentar*, vol. 1 (Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens) 4 (Berlin: 1995), 131–34—on the development of the Cologne *Studium generale* 1266–1350 see 126–41; Senner, “Meister Eckhart in Köln,” in *Meister Eckhart* (note 194), 207–37, see 207–10.

²⁰⁸ “Ein vräge was gester in der schuole under grôzen pfaffen.” Sermon 22: *DW I* (1958), 381.3; see Koch (note 11), 303. English translation by Bernard McGinn (note 33), 194. Kurt Ruh, who did not locate this sermon at Cologne, even thought of Paris: on this as the place and time of the sermon see further below.

²⁰⁹ *ACG* (note 50) 1, 99.32 sq.

²¹⁰ “als ich sprach in der schuole” *DW I* (1958), 389.2; see Koch (note 11), 303. English (note 33), 196.

came from Paris to Cologne;²¹¹ on the way he dedicated his *Tractatus de adventu Christi, Antichristi et fine mundi* to the archbishop of Trier calling himself "fr. Nicolaus de Argentina, lector Coloniensis ordinis fratrum predicatorum."²¹² In September 1324 he delivered the "preek op den gulden berg" as *lector Coloniensis* at the provincial chapter at Louvain.²¹³ In August 1325 he is called "*olim lector in convent Coloniensi*,"²¹⁴ and beginning in 1327 he calls himself "*lector fratrum Predicatorum domus Coloniensis*."²¹⁵ As Gabriel Löhr has shown "*lector domus . . .*" was already an unambiguous designation for the function as *lector principalis* at the priory in question.²¹⁶ Koch's explanation, that Eckhart would have been the head of the *studium generale* and Nicholas his lector subordinate to him²¹⁷ is—with good reason—not accepted by Frank, as it would have been very unusual that a former *lector principalis* of a *studium generale* would return to a lower position.²¹⁸ Trusen supposed Meister Eckhart as lector of the *studium generale* and Nicholas of Strasbourg at the same time as lector of the *studium particulare*.²¹⁹ It was not allowed, however, that in addition to a *studium generale* there would be another school in a priory.²²⁰ This does not mean,

²¹¹ Ruedi Imbach and Ulrika Lindblad, "Compilatio rudis et puerilis: Hinweise und Materialien zu Nikolaus von Straßburg OP und seiner Summa," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 32 (1985), 155–233, 166 sq., for indication of the sources. On Nicholas in general, see Ulrich Ruh and Eugen Hillenbrand, "Nikolaus von Straßburg OP," in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon* 6 (Berlin: 1987), 1153–1159.

²¹² Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. Theol. Lat. 4° 175, fol. 42r; see *SOP* (note 40) 3, 144 sq., no. 3034. Besides six manuscripts with this dedication there are also three (two are lost) with a dedication to Pope John XXII.

²¹³ Stefanus Axters, *Bibliotheca Dominicana Neerlandica manuscripta 1224–1500*, (Bibliothèque de la Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique) 49 (Louvain: 1970), 64–69, lists 34 manuscripts, and 313–17, with regard to four disappeared manuscripts with various ascriptions, which can however be explained by confusion between the origin "Straatsburg/Argentina" and the dwelling place "Keulen/Colonia" of Nicholas.

²¹⁴ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 44, 190.11 sq.; see further below.

²¹⁵ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 51, 538.7 sq.

²¹⁶ Gabriel Löhr, "Über die Heimat einiger deutscher Prediger und Mytiker aus dem Dominikanerorden," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 82 (1948), 173–78, see 174; The general chapter of 1286 had forbidden the use of lector or *magister* as an honorary title: *ACG* (note 50), 1, 234.19–21; see Senner, *Johannes* (note 207), 1, 128.

²¹⁷ Koch (note 11), 305; see Senner, *Johannes* (note 207), 1, 128.

²¹⁸ Frank, "Zur Studienorganisation" (note 207), 67; see Senner: *Johannes* (note 207), 1, 133.

²¹⁹ Trusen (note 12), 63 sq.; similar: Erich Meuthen, *Die alte Universität* (Kölner Universitätsgeschichte) 1 (Köln: 1998), 44 sq.

²²⁰ "Studia vero arcium vel philosophie ullo modo in eisdem conventibus non ponantur" *ACG* (note 50), 79.12 sq. The cursorial course on the Bible and the course on the *Sentences* were nevertheless part of the curriculum at the *studium generale*; Senner, *Johannes* (note 207), 1, 133.

of course, that Eckhart's teaching at the Cologne *Studium generale* in the 1320s could be positively excluded. We just do not have any evidence on the matter.

Focusing exclusively on Meister Eckhart as an academic teacher has had the consequence that his other activities have not always received due attention. In some sermons we have hints of the churches where he preached around 1323–26, and where certain earlier sermons had been delivered. Josef Quint, at the beginning of his editorial work, thought that they would have been delivered at Strasbourg.²²¹ Later, when residing at Cologne, he knew that city better and corrected himself and located them there.²²² Josef Koch, residing at Cologne after World War II, also found indications of specific places in four of Eckhart's sermons.²²³ Kurt Ruh, however, did not accept those locations and insisted on Strasbourg as the place: "none of the Cologne sermons of the Meister can be traced."²²⁴ Senner²²⁵ and more recently Löser²²⁶ insist that there were churches named "Sant Magfire/Sent merueren" (St Maccabeans),²²⁷ and "mariengarten/zo meirgarten/zomergarten/zu dem garten" (St Mariengarten)²²⁸ in Cologne but not in Strasbourg. Ruh asks rhetorically what sense it could have to refer to sermons given at other places in a church of Benedictine

²²¹ See e.g. *DW I* (1st fasc. 1936), 208–10 on Sermon 13, 229 on Sermon 14.

²²² See e.g. *DW I* (1st fasc. 1936), 372–74 on Sermon 22.

²²³ Sermon 12, 13, 14, 22: Koch (note 11), 302.

²²⁴ Kurt Ruh, "Zu Meister Eckharts Kölner Predigten," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 128 (1999), 42–46, see 42. This was mainly against Joachim Theisen, *Predigt und Gottesdienst: liturgische Strukturen in den Predigten Meister Eckharts*, (Frankfurt am Main: 1990), who thought that many sermons can be located at Cologne. Unfortunately the critique by Ruh also discredited the less speculative aspect of Theisen's book: the liturgical background to Eckhart's sermons. It was only in 2003 that this issue was raised anew. See Loris Sturlese, "Hat es ein Corpus der deutschen Predigten Meister Eckharts gegeben? Liturgische Bemerkungen zu aktuellen philosophiehistorischen Fragen," in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt* (note 21), 393–408.

²²⁵ "Meister Eckhart in Köln" (note 207), 226–28.

²²⁶ "Was sind Meister Eckharts deutsche Straßburger Predigten?" (note 195).

²²⁷ Sermon 22: *DW I*, 380.7 sq.; reference to Sermon 12. Sermon 14: *DW I*, 233.9; reference to Sermon 15. I cannot exclude that "Sent merueren" could still be "St Mechtern," another historical Cologne church—but this would necessitate research of its own, for which recourse to the collations or retracing in the manuscripts would be necessary. The critical apparatus in *DW I* does not give information on this point.

²²⁸ Sermon 13, *DW I*, 214.12 and 217.5. Quint first erroneously read "St Margareten" but corrected himself later on (*ibid.*, 372–74 and 380). The variants show that some scribes did not understand this rare name. "St Margaret" and "St Maria ad gradus" existed in both Strasbourg and Cologne. See Löser (note 195), 38–41; Karl Heinz Witte: "Von Straßburg nach Köln: Die Entwicklung der Gottesgeburtstheorie Eckharts in den Kölner Predigten," in *Meister-Eckhart-Jahrbuch* 2 (2008), 65–94, see 85 sq.

(St Maccabeans) or Cistercian (St Mariengarten) nuns.²²⁹ Indeed, the cloistered nuns could not move to another place to listen there to a sermon of the Meister. But another audience, Beguines or any non-cloistered faithful, fascinated by what he said, could and did—as I conjecture from those references to different churches.

In Cologne, as in other regions and places, the relation between secular clergy and mendicant orders was not without the usual conflicts: where can the faithful fulfill their duty to participate in Sunday mass, who has the right to hear confessions and to administer the other sacraments, where are burials to be held and by whom, who is entitled to receive fees and alms, and so on.²³⁰ A specific problem in Cologne was the tension between the archbishop and the city council. The archbishop was not only the ecclesiastical leader, but was also the (feudal) ruler of the region. In the 13th century, the city of Cologne had achieved some independence and it attempted in the early 14th century to expand this independence into complete autonomy.²³¹ In 1319, this escalated into a military confrontation between the troops of the archbishop on one side and the armies of Cologne, the counts of Berg, Holland, Geldern, and Jülich on the other.²³² Only when the pontiff had acknowledged the liberties and privileges of the city on 7 September 1328 did the townspeople pledge to him their oath of allegiance.²³³ A graver political problem arose due to the conflict between Pope John XXII and Louis of Bavaria. The latter was not recognized by the pontiff as emperor. In 1322 at Mühldorf, Louis had won the decisive battle against his competitor Frederick of Habsburg, but the archbishop of Cologne still favored the latter, whom he had crowned.²³⁴ The city of Cologne like the majority of the princes, among them Gerhard Count of Jülich, was on the side of Louis.²³⁵ The conflict escalated in 1324.

²²⁹ Ruh: "Zu Meister Eckharts Kölner Predigten" (note 224), 44 sq.

²³⁰ Senner, "Meister Eckhart in Köln" (note 207), 217.

²³¹ *Albertus Magnus: Ausstellung zum 700. Todestag*, (Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln) (Köln: 1980), no. 105, 91–94; Senner: "Meister Eckhart in Köln" (note 207), 214.

²³² *Die Regesten der Erzbischöfe von Köln im Mittelalter* (REK hereafter), vol. 4: 1304–1332, ed. Wilhelm Kisky (Bonn: 1915; repr. 1964), 263 sq., no. 1164; see also Senner, "Meister Eckhart in Köln" (note 207), 214.

²³³ REK (note 232), 4, 427–29, no. 1765–70; Wilhelm Janssen: *Die Geschichte des Erzbistums Köln*, vol. 2, 1: *Das Erzbistum Köln im späten Mittelalter* (Köln: 1995), 218.

²³⁴ Janssen (note 233), 2, 1, 214–19; on the political development during this time: Heinz Thomas, *Ludwig der Bayer: Kaiser und Ketzer* (Regensburg: 1993), 159–76.

²³⁵ Janssen (note 233), 2, 1, 214–19. In summer 1324 the city of Cologne seems to have taken an ambiguous position, see Senner, "Meister Eckhart in Köln" (note 207), 211–13. Concerning Jülich, see Thomas R. Kraus, *Jülich, Aachen und das Reich: Studien zur Entstehung*

On 7 January of that year, the pope banned Louis of Bavaria, and by 28 March this ban had been published.²³⁶ On 22 May the king appealed at Sachsenhausen (Frankfurt) against the pope to the Holy See.²³⁷ On 11 July, Pope John XXII declared Louis stripped of all royal powers and banned his followers. This was communicated to Henry, archbishop of Cologne, on 19 July, with the demand for publication.²³⁸ On 15 August 1324 the archbishop sent copies of the papal bull to the Cologne Dominicans ordering, by penalty of excommunication, that it be read out in public in German on Sunday after high mass and after the afternoon sermon. They had to confirm this by an instrument (a receipt attested by a notary) which they had to send him within six days.²³⁹ A day later he ordered the parish priests to purchase a copy at their own cost, to read the bull in public on two Sundays, and to provide him with confirmation that they had done so.²⁴⁰ This did not satisfy the archbishop because on 18 September, at a meeting of the whole Cologne clergy held in the cathedral moderated by the provost of Bonn, the papal documents were read out, copies were given to the priors of the mendicant orders, and to the treasurer of the cities parish priests for further publication.²⁴¹ During the following years the conflict further escalated. On 17 January 1328, Louis of Bavaria had himself crowned emperor by Sciarra Colonna, appointed "Capitano" of Rome for this occasion, declared the pope deposed of his office on 18 April, and on Pentecost he had himself crowned emperor another time by the antipope Nicholas de Corvaro.²⁴² The pope reacted by calling up (without success) a crusade against "the Bavarian."

Ever since 1247, conflicts, mainly about financial contributions to parish churches, between Beguines and the Cologne parochial clergy are well

der Landesherrschaft der Grafen von Jülich bis zum Jahre 1328, (Veröffentlichungen des Stadtarchivs Aachen) 5 (Aachen: 1987), 223–34.

²³⁶ REK (note 232) 4, 347 sq., no. 1439—28 March seems to be the scheduled date of publication rather than the date of sending from Avignon, as on 6 April the pope writes to the archbishop, repeating his demand for public reading of the process: REK (note 232), 4, 349, no. 1444. This corrects my view in Senner, "Meister Eckhart in Köln" (note 207), 211. The documents by the pope and the king are published in Jürgen Miethke and Arnold Bühler, *Kaiser und Papst im Konflikt: zum Verhältnis von Staat und Kirche im späten Mittelalter*, (Historisches Seminar 6) (Düsseldorf: 1988) who discuss this conflict, see 38–45.

²³⁷ Thomas, *Ludwig* (note 234), 164–70.

²³⁸ REK (note 232), 4, 355 sq., no. 1472.

²³⁹ REK (note 232), 4, 358, no. 1483.

²⁴⁰ REK (note 232), 4, 358, no. 1484.

²⁴¹ REK (note 232), 4, 359, no. 1490. The confirmation by the Friars Minor is preserved: REK 4, 361 sq., nos 1492 sq. and 1497 sq.

²⁴² Thomas, *Ludwig* (note 234), 204–08 and 211 sq.

documented.²⁴³ The reproach of heresy is only discovered 60 years later. At the diocesan synod in 1307, "Beggardi et Beggarde et Apostoli" were excommunicated.²⁴⁴ Mainly due to the insistence of the Rhineland bishops, the Council of Vienne in 1311–12 condemned women commonly called *Beguinae* living similar to the religious but not following a recognized rule. The Beguines give only the appearance of holiness and seduce many by unfounded speculations on the divine Trinity: their status is forbidden.²⁴⁵ Evidently this was the model for a canon of the Cologne diocesan synod in 1319. There the Friars Preachers, Friars Minors, and members of other mendicant orders were charged with fostering the forbidden status of the Beguines.²⁴⁶

It has sometimes been doubted that the so-called "sect of the free spirit" ever existed²⁴⁷ or that we have reliable testimonies about its activities and its doctrines.²⁴⁸ Indeed, this "underground movement" cannot be grasped as an organizational structure; it was rather a network of local groups. From the 1320s, however, we have a record that gives detailed information about such a group at Cologne.²⁴⁹ It remains unclear whether this was the heretical group which was detected in 1326. On 5 April the archbishop of Cologne, Henry II of Virneburg, demanded that judges and city authorities arrest some people, clerics as well as laypeople, who adhered to a terrible although unspecified heresy, and ordered them to be held in prison until

²⁴³ Johannes Asen, "Die Beginen in Köln," in *Annalen des Historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein* 111 (1927), 81–180, see 103 sq.

²⁴⁴ *REK* (note 232), 4, 42 sq., no. 229. For the charges, see Josephus Hartzheim, *Concilia Germaniae*, vol. 4 (Coloniae: 1761), 101a–102a; *Documenta ecclesiastica christianae perfectionis studium spectantia*, ed. Joseph de Guibert (Rome: 1931), 154; see Senner, "Meister Eckhart in Köln" (note 207), 219.

²⁴⁵ *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo (Bologna: 1973), 374, no. 16. The *constitutio* was, however, published only in 1317.

²⁴⁶ Heinrich Lepper, "Unbekannte Synodalstatuten der Kölner Erzbischöfe Heinrich von Virneburg (1306–1332) und Wilhelm von Gennep (1349–1362)," *Annuario historiae conciliorum* 11 (1979), 339–54, see 354.

²⁴⁷ André Vauchez, *Die Zeit der Zerreißproben*, (Geschichte des Christentums) 6 (Freiburg im Breisgau: 1991), 316; Robert N. Swanson, "Literacy, heresy, history and orthodoxy: Perspectives and permutations for the later middle ages," in *Heresy and Literacy 1000–1530*, ed. Peter Biller (Cambridge: 1994), 279–93, see 281.

²⁴⁸ Robert E. Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages* (Berkeley: 1972), 108–12, on the document in question here.

²⁴⁹ Wilhelm Wattenbach, "Über die Secte der Brüder vom Freien Geiste," *Sitzungsberichte der Kgl. Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-histor. Kl.* 29 (Berlin: 1887), 529–37; see Senner: "Rhineland Dominicans" (note 197), 123–25.

he communicated his further decision.²⁵⁰ Martin of Poland, who ca. 1330 redacted the *Continuatio Chronicae regiae Coloniensis* reports: "A.D. 1326, a certain heresy was discovered at Cologne, which lasted for some years. To examine it by precept of Lord Henry, Archbishop of Cologne, learned men, Friars Preachers and Minors and some other religious were appointed. They explored that heresy with the greatest diligence and for a long time. Some of <the heretics> were converted by them to the true faith, but two priests, one layman and six women persevered in that perfidy. One of the priests by name Waltherus, who was the promoter of that heresy, was burned alive, and the others were delivered to perpetual imprisonment."²⁵¹ This event happened during the time when the accusation against Meister Eckhart was made in the court of the archbishop of Cologne.

3. THE TRIAL

Much has been written about Meister Eckhart's trial, and much of it lacks a solid foundation in fact. Most of the relevant documents are known and edited.²⁵² Although Grabmann had already written in 1927: "Now it is possible to reconstruct this process with a high measure of certainty,"²⁵³ many modern interpretations, due to the lack of competence in the history of law, are incomplete and somewhat misleading. Still, Malcolm Lambert saw him as a victim of the Inquisition and especially of the archbishop of Cologne, Henry II of Virneberg.²⁵⁴ This was the situation until the

²⁵⁰ Köln, Historisches Archiv der Stadt, Haupturkunde Nr. 1170; the original is unattainable—although hopefully not lost—due to the collapse of the archives in 2009. A résumé can be found in: *REK* (note 232), 4, 384, no. 1586; see *Chronik zur Geschichte der Stadt Köln*, vol. 1 *Von den Anfängen bis 1400*. ed. Peter Fuchs (Köln: 1999), 266b–c.

²⁵¹ "A.D. 1326, heresis quedam propalata est Colonie, que annis aliquibus duraverat, ad quam examinandum cum ex precepto domini Heinrici archiepiscopi Coloniensis viri literati, fratres Predicatores, Minores et alii quam plures religiosi advocati fuissent et ipsam heresim maxima deliberacione et multo tempore discuterent, aliquos ex ipsis ad veram fidem converterunt, duobus sacerdotibus et uno laico et sex feminis in perfidia perseverantibus. Unus autem de duobus sacerdotibus nomine Waltherus, qui et ductor ipsius heresis extitit, vivus exustus est, ceterique perpetuo carcere deputati." *Chronica regia Coloniensis (Annales maximi Colonienses) cum continuationibus in monasterio S. Pantaleonis scripti aliisque historiae Coloniensis monumentis*, ed. Georg Waitz, Monumenta Germaniae historica, scriptores rerum Germanicarum 18 (Hannover: 1980), no. 91, 369.

²⁵² The story of their discovery since 1847: Hornstein (note 11), 27 sq. The (partial) editions are given with the relative documents. Our reference is the excellent critical edition by Loris Sturlese in *Acta Echardiana* (note 2).

²⁵³ Grabmann, *Neuaufgefundene* (note 54), 4/1, 264.

²⁵⁴ Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy* (Oxford: 1992), 187 sq. Peter Fuchs in *Chronik* (note 250), vol. 1, 266b–c, still thought the Cologne process was initiated by the archbishop

appearance of Winfried Trusen's groundbreaking, *Der Prozeß gegen Meister Eckhart: Vorgeschichte, Verlauf und Folgen*.²⁵⁵ Loris Sturlese's research in preparing the critical edition brought still more important new results.²⁵⁶ In this section I will rely mainly on these two works to describe the three different stages in the development of the case.²⁵⁷

The questions whether the incriminated theses are representative of Meister Eckhart's thought, or are fragments isolated from their context and hence deprived of their sense, or whether the accusers, judges, and censors at Cologne and Avignon would have understood the Meister correctly and whether his doctrine would be in agreement with defined Catholic faith—as it was in his time and as it is now—will not be discussed here since this would require an in-depth study not only of Eckhart's theology but also an exploration of the theological background of the censors and of Pope John XXII. It would require a judgement as to whether their concept of Catholic doctrine expressed in terms of the criteria of that time was an adequate expression of the *depositum fidei*.

The Dominican general chapter in the year 1325 had been convoked to meet on Sunday before Pentecost at Erfurt in the province of Saxony, Germany.²⁵⁸ Presumably because of the conflict between Louis of Bavaria and Pope John XXII, it was moved to Venice, outside the reach of the Bavarian. During this chapter a gracious papal letter to the order was

in 1326 and that Nicholas of Strasbourg would have attempted to withdraw the case from the archdioecesan tribunal afterwards.

²⁵⁵ See above note 12. For a short version, see Trusen, "Zum Prozeß gegen Meister Eckhart," *Eckhardus Theutonicus homo doctus et sanctus: Nachweise und Berichte zum Prozeß gegen Meister Eckhart*, ed. Heinrich Stirnimann and Ruedi Imbach, Dokimion 11 (Fribourg: 1992), 7–30. Further developed in Trusen, "Meister Eckhart vor seinen Richtern und Zensoren: eine Kritik falsch gedeuteter Redesituationen," in *Meister Eckhart: Lebensstationen* (note 194), 335–52.

²⁵⁶ Loris Sturlese, "Die Kölner Eckhartisten" (note 206); Sturlese, "Eckhart, l'inquisizione di Colonia e la memoria difensiva conservata nel codice Soest 33," *Giornale critico della filosofia Italiana* 80 (2001), 62–89.

²⁵⁷ From Jürgen Miethke, "Der Eckhartprozeß in Köln und Avignon," in *L'età dei processi, inchieste e condanne trà politica e ideologia nel '300*, (*Atti del convegno di studi svoltosi in occasione della 19 ed. del Premio Internazionale Ascoli Piceno*), ed. Antonio Rigon (Roma: 2009), 119–43; and Alessandra Beccarisi, "Meister Eckhart against the Inquisition," a paper presented at the Leeds International Medieval Congress 2009, to be published in short-ended form as "Nicholas of Strasbourg and Meister Eckhart, in *Adorare caelestia, gubernare terrena: International conference in honour of Paolo Lucentini* (Naples, 6–7 nov. 2007), ed. P. Arfé et al., (Turnhout, 2011), 361–68. I thank Mr Miethke and Mrs Beccarisi, who gave me access to their texts before publication, for valuable insights and suggestions.

²⁵⁸ ACG (note 50), 2, 154.30.

read out. The letter impressed the capitular representatives so much that they decided to have it read at each priory and in all provincial chapters.²⁵⁹ Henricus, prior of Regensburg, was deposed and as a penalty moved to the province of Saxony because he did not duly publish the papal bull against Louis the Bavarian.²⁶⁰ This also happened elsewhere in the province of Germany (Teutonia). And because of sermons in the vernacular by some friars delivered to unlearned people “which easily could lead his audience into error,” Brother Gervasius, prior of Angers from the French Province (Francia), was sent as a vicar to inquire about those things, and then to punish and force the delinquents to obey the mandate given by the pope and the master of the order.²⁶¹ Whereas Hartingus, the provincial of Saxonia, was dismissed, Henricus de Gruningen of the Teutonia province²⁶² was not removed from office. Presumably, both provincials were present since it was a chapter of provincials.

Already Bendict M. Reichert, the editor of the *Acta Capitulorum Generalium*, remarked that “it is not possible to deduce from the documents yet known whether *magister* Eckardus would have to be counted among those preachers.”²⁶³ The tenor of the directive, however, points in the main to the failed publication of the papal bull. The misunderstandable sermons delivered by a plurality of friars could even more be seen in that context,²⁶⁴ whereas the prior provincial evidently was loyal to the papal

²⁵⁹ *ACG* (note 50), 2, 157.15–28.

²⁶⁰ *ACG* (note 50), 2, 160.3–6.

²⁶¹ “Cum ad nos gravis et notabilis querimonia pervenerit et rationabilis, quod fratres quidam provincie Theutonie circa processus sanctissimi patris et domini nostri pape publicandos et servandos fuerint notabiliter negligentes, cum tamen super hoc tam apostolicum quam magistri ordinis habuerint preceptum expressum, et notificatum eciam nobis fuerit fide digna relatione multorum, quod in ipsa provincia per fratres quosdam in predicatione vulgari quedam personis vulgaribus ac rudibus in sermonibus proponuntur, que possint auditores facilius deducere in errorem, idcirco damus vicarium super istis diligentius inquirendis et censura debita puniendis ac coercendis fratrem Gervasium, priorem Andegavensem, de provincia Francie” *ACG* (note 50), 2, 160.25–161.5.

²⁶² *ACG* (note 50), 2, 159.2. For Hartingus, see Loë, *Saxonia* (note 27), 16 sq., no. 4; for Henricus see Loë, *Teutonia* (note 118), 24 (printing error: MCCCXIII for MCCCXXIII!); 28, no. 25; 33. Only in the case of the provincial of *Hungaria*, who was also discharged, was a *vicarius generalis* appointed (161, 6 sq.). Thus, the discharge of Hartingus was not necessarily a penalty. The province of Saxonia, based in most of the region dominated by Louis of Bavaria, is not mentioned as disobedient to the mandate to publish the papal bull.

²⁶³ *ACG* (note 50), 2, 161.5, note 2.

²⁶⁴ An ordination of the general chapter in 1327, Nicholas of Strasbourg participating as diffinitor of Teutonia, is rather in favor of this interpretation: “Quicumque in publica predicatione vel in communi coram secularium multitudine ullo tempore summum pontificem diffamaverit vel ipsius processus vel facta vel irreverenciam notabilem fecerit, carcerali custodie mancipetur, nec inde liberetur nisi per capitulum generale et cogatur, si com-

and the master's mandate, as he was not punished. But with this our information about what was misleading in those sermons is ambiguous. It is astonishing that from the general chapter in the next year we do not have any notice about sanctions against priors or other friars in the German province. Be this as it may, the pope evidently was not satisfied with this measure because he soon intervened in a quite unusual way.

On 1 August 1325, Pope John XXII sent the Dominicans Nicholas of Strasbourg and Benedict of Cumis (of Asnago) as his *vicarios*, visitators and correctors, to the western and southern German province (Teutonia).²⁶⁵ This was a grave intervention into the internal autonomy of the order, an action which normally would have been within the competence of its own authorities. The master general, Barnabas de Vercellis, was just informed by an accompanying letter.²⁶⁶ As the motive for this immediate action of the sovereign pontiff we read: "that by some friars of your order in the region of Germany some dishonest and indecent <acts> have been committed and what is honest behaviour is left aside or not cared for, on which a suited remedy had to be provided quickly."²⁶⁷ The commission itself gives us a somewhat more precise indication: some friars have caused discord, damaging the observance of the order and oppressing those friars

mode fieri poterit, in publico revocare," *ACG* (note 50), 2, 168.29–169.6; the quote is from 168.29–33.

²⁶⁵ Archivio Segreto Vaticano, *Registrum Vaticanum* 113, fol. 184r–v; printed in *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 44, *LW V*, 190–92, for the *Litterae Apostolicae* itself see 191.21–192.67. The commission is expressly stated as: "comittimus et mandamus . . . iuxta statuta et observantias ipsius ordinis informatione recepta corrigere et reformare tam in capite quam in membris, que correctione et reformatione indigere noveritis, amovendo ab officiis et gradibus suis ac transferendo ad conventos alios infra dictam provinciam vel extra illos, de quibus vobis videtur." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), 191.40–46. Trusen (note 12), 63 and *passim*, considers Nicholas and Benedict as simply visitators. The text cited above, however, gives them not only a mandate to report about evils but to "correct and reform" and to "remove from offices and grades" when they consider it necessary. Beccarisi (note 257) sees in Nicholas and Benedict vicars—but this designation is not contained in the document, we find it however in 1326: see note 274.

²⁶⁶ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 44, *LW V*, 190.1–191.19. Preger (note 206), 1, 356, thinks the order would have proposed Nicholas to the pope, but since the general chapter some weeks earlier had appointed Gervasius this can be excluded. Nicholas had commended himself to Pope John XXII by the dedication of his (rather than Johannes Parisensis Quiddort's) *Tractatus de adventu Christi, Antichristi et fine mundi* (see above note 211).

²⁶⁷ "quod per nonnullos tui ordinis fratres in partibus Alamannie nonnulla inhonesta et indecentia committuntur, et ommittuntur seu negliguntur honesta, super quibus esset de oportuno remedio celeriter providendum" (*Acta Echardiana*, note 2 above, no. 44, 190.2–5).

who would live in a praiseworthy way, unjustly depriving them of their status and rank.²⁶⁸

This points to existing internal conflicts affecting the *observantia regularis*, the specific way of religious life in the order where superiors of a lax tendency would have sidetracked those who wanted to live up to their order's ideals—a conflict about which we also have indications from other sources.²⁶⁹ That the pope interferes in such a situation, which would have been within the obligations and the power of the order's master general, and notwithstanding the measures already taken by the recent general chapter, may be explained less by the negligence of the responsible friars—Barnabas de Vercellis was known for his zeal for *observantia regularis* as well as for his attachment to the pope²⁷⁰—than by the political situation in Germany. This may well have been the main motive. An important limitation, however, is that Nicholas and Bernard may not depose the provincial, but should report to the master of the order and to the *diffinitores* (of the general chapter) if they found grievances against him, so that they (the master and the *diffinitores*) can arrange what seems fitting to them.²⁷¹ Indeed, the report seems to have been unfavorable to the provincial, Henricus de Gruningen, because he was deposed by the general chapter in 1326.²⁷²

Whereas it seems that Benedict did not exercise this office,²⁷³ Nicholas came to Cologne—or even received his commission there—and investi-

²⁶⁸ "Quod nonnulli fratres ordinis predicatorum provincie Teutonie omni modestia religionis abiecta parcialitatum scissuras, quas ibidem cunctorum malorum inceptor dicitur suscitasse, sequuntur improvide ad alia dilapsi plura illicita contra observantias regulares, ex quibus preteritis temporibus asseritur sepius contigisse, quod quamplures eiusdem ordinis fratres laudabilis conversationis et vite graves ab eorum superioribus sunt perpersi iacturas, diversisque molestiis et iniuriis lacessiti nonnullis ex eis ab eorum statibus et gradibus privatis iniuste, ac ab ipsius ordinis gratia factis minus rationabiliter alienis" (*Acta Echardiana*, note 2 above, no. 44, 191.30–37).

²⁶⁹ See Walter Senner, "Heinrich Seuse und der Dominikanerorden," *Heinrich Seuses Philosophia spiritualis*, ed. Rüdiger Blumrich, *Wissensliteratur im Mittelalter 17* (Wiesbaden: 1994), 13–17; Senner, "Meister Eckhart in Köln" (note 207), 215 sq.

²⁷⁰ Mortier (note 69), 3 (1907), 6–13 and 48 sq.

²⁷¹ "Nolumus autem quod priorem provincialem prelibati ordinis a suo valeatis officio remove, sed quecumque repperitis contra eum, dilectis filiis magistro et diffinitoribus memorati ordinis procuretis fideliter intimare, ut ipsi valeant super hiis quod de deo gratum existere et eidem ordini expedire cognoverint ordinare." (*Acta Echardiana*, note 2, no. 44, 191.48–51).

²⁷² *ACG* (note 50), 2, 166.15; the interdiction to reelect him in the same year (l. 18 sq.) shows that this was rather a sanction.

²⁷³ The formulation "vos vel alter vestrum ad dictam provinciam <Teutoniae> personaliter conferentes." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 44, 191.40 sq. leaves the possibility that only one of the two visitors actually performed the task. "Benedictus de Cumis" was

gated this priory in the fall and/or winter of 1325. After this we find him on 5 April 1326 conducting a visitation at Bern, where he is referred to as *magistri Ordinis de speciali mandato Summi Pontificis per provinciam Theutonie vicarii generalis*.²⁷⁴ Loris Sturlese expresses what is likely to have been the view by many German Dominicans: "finally the right man at the right place."²⁷⁵

Even before Nicholas could act, the provincial chapter was already being held at Zürich during the second week of September.²⁷⁶ Hermann of Summo had spread "inflammatory rumors" about other friars and even composed "notorious pamphlets" with such contents.²⁷⁷ He did not call the accused to justify themselves, but simply uttered these rumors.²⁷⁸ At the chapter he was accused and convicted of having given false witness by spreading oral rumors and writing pamphlets against a friar—Meister Eckhart—about a grave crime (heresy). Even his friend, Brother Henricus de Gruningen, who was the provincial at that time, had to concede this "for the sake of justice."²⁷⁹ Furthermore, Hermann was convicted of having given false witness in some less grave cases as well.²⁸⁰ To be *falsus*

appointed lector of the Bologna *Studium generale* by the general chapter in 1326: ACG (note 50), 166.28 sq.

²⁷⁴ Basel Stadtarchiv, doc. no. 234, printed in: Gabriel M. Löhr, *Die Teutonia im 15. Jahrhundert: Studien und Texte vornehmlich zur Geschichte ihrer Reform*, (Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens in Deutschland) NS 19 (Leipzig: 1924), app. no. 45, 159–62, see 159.

²⁷⁵ Introduction to Nikolaus von Straßburg, *Summa: Liber. 2*, tr. 1–2, ed. Gianfranco Pellegri, *Corpus philosophorum Teutonicorum medii aevi* 5, 2, 1 (Hamburg: 2009), vii.

²⁷⁶ The provincial chapter of 1325, was likely to have been held on 8 September 1325 and the following days because the now provincial Henricus de Cigno is called "a diffinitor and now provincial" and Henricus de Gruningen his predecessor (i.e. at the time Gerardus de Podhans wrote his accusation, after Pentecost 1327). *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56, 552–56; see further below, note 286.

²⁷⁷ "5°, quod plures libellos famosos scripsit, per quos fratres honestissimos de melioribus tocius Alamannie mendaciter de gravibus criminibus infamavit." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56, 553.20 sq.

²⁷⁸ "6° obicitur, quod prefatos libellos famosos longo tempore retinuit contra plura precepta... Nec fratres, quos in dictis libellis infamavit, ad rationem posuit. Ex quo patet quod hoc non fecit causa correctionis, sed intendens tantummodo infamare et bonorum fratrum famam et nomen denigrare." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56, 553.27–32.

²⁷⁹ "Ista sunt que habentur contra fratrem Hermannum de Summo. 1°, quod in actione criminali tulit falsum testimonium. Et de hoc patenter accusatus fuit in provinciali capitulo et convictus, sicut patet per sententiam omnium diffinitorum... Alius vero predecessor suos <i.e. fr. Henrici de Cigno>, qui quamvis familiariter eum diligere consueverit, una cum aliis diffinitoribus in dicta causa contra ipsum sententiavit iustitia exigente." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56, 552.1–7.

²⁸⁰ "2°, quod pluries in actionibus non criminalibus falsum tulit testimonium. Et de hoc in eodem capitulo accusatus fuit etiam et convictus": *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56, 552.8 sq.

accusator fratrum was considered a severe crime. Humbert of Romans called any such accusation diabolic if “done not with the intention to heal but to destroy.”²⁸¹ He therefore gives detailed indications of how a proper accusation is to be made: with witnesses, first only addressed to the superior, and always with the intention to better the accused friar.²⁸² His calumny would have handed to Hermann the penalty which the accused would have incurred in case the charge would have been considered as justified.²⁸³

During the visitation by Nicholas of Strasbourg in the Cologne priory, Hermann of Summo²⁸⁴ and William of Nideggen²⁸⁵ were accused of grave infractions against the discipline and interior peace of the order and their priory. As far as we learn from a later document,²⁸⁶ the charges were as follows: Fr Hermannus had unjustly sentenced two friars when he was a visitor in a priory.²⁸⁷ As visitor (inspector) of the Cologne priory by mandate of the then provincial, Henricus de Gruningen, he had tried to influence an election (presumably of the prior) by moving friars elsewhere and by attempting other grave interventions so that the friars physically

²⁸¹ “huiusmodi accusatio est diabolica . . . et constat quod accusant non ad sanandum, sed ad perdendum.” Humbertus de Romanis, *Expositio regulae B. Augustini*, c. 3, no. 99, Opera (note 72), 1, 314.

²⁸² Ibid., c. 3, no. 100, 317–22.

²⁸³ Demanded by the procurator concerning William: “propter que ad penam tallionis condemnari merito debuit et puniri . . .,” *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56, 555.104 sq.

²⁸⁴ He appears from 1316 onwards in Cologne documents: Gabriel Löhr, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Kölner Dominikanerklosters*, (Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens in Deutschland) 16–17 (Leipzig: 1922), 96, no. 215. We learn from them that his father was the cathedral’s baker, Hermann, his mother Sophia was a widow in 1316 and that his sister Sophia was a Beguine in 1318 (98, no. 223) and his brother Tilman a (secular) priest (100 sq., no. 231). In 1320 Hermann has a private seal—not allowed for friars—in 1327 he appears as witness in Nicholas’s and Meister Eckhart’s appeals: see below.

²⁸⁵ Gabriel Löhr, *Beiträge* (note 284), has him only in connection with the process against Meister Eckhart (121, no. 287a). Still, Trusen (note 12), 73 sq., insisted against Koch (note 11), 328, note 213, that William of Nideggen would have come from Alsatia and would have brought incriminating material with him from there. However, I could show that he indeed came from Nideggen, at that time one of the principal castles of the count of Jülich, and that he claimed he would go to Italy with the knights of the Count of Jülich and take vengeance for what the order had done to him. *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56, 556.113–15, see Senner, “Meister Eckhart in Köln” (note 207), 226 sq.

²⁸⁶ Accusation by the acting Dominican procurator general Gerardus de Podhans, summer 1327: *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56, 552–56. On visitation, see above, note 132.

²⁸⁷ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56: “quae habentur contra fratrem Hermannum de Summo” 3^o: 552.10–14. The numbers are not relating to the visitation but to the accusation by Fr Gerardus de Podhans (note 286). This is a (incomplete) reconstruction on that basis, insofar as the formulations let us conclude the time when those charges were first made.

assaulted him during the discussion of the election.²⁸⁸ Besides, it was proven that he vanished from the priory in civilian clothes repeatedly at night²⁸⁹ and that he had close company with lewd and suspected persons, especially with a poor young woman, who seemed to be the concubine of a secular priest.²⁹⁰ In sum, Hermann caused so much trouble everywhere that "all the better friars of *Teutonia* province asked the general vicar of the province, Nicolas of Strasbourg, to expel him from the province."²⁹¹

William of Nideggen was accused of having intimate contact with women of bad fame²⁹² to the detriment of his studies and the good fame of the order,²⁹³ due to his continuously visiting a certain nun, violating her seclusion, even after a provincial chapter had expressly forbidden this,²⁹⁴ and of causing trouble everywhere.²⁹⁵ At first, William did not collaborate with the general vicar (Nicholas of Strasbourg), refusing to tell him what he knew.²⁹⁶ Under accusation both Hermann and William in turn accused Meister Eckhart of heresy "and many other severe"

²⁸⁸ "10°, quod in visitando conventum Coloniensem de mandato prioris provincialis, qui tunc erat, propter multas mutationes fratrum, quas instante quedam electione fecit, et propter alia enormia que commisit, tante discentionis et turbationis causa fuit, quod in die tractatus fratres ad verbera pervenerunt." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56, 554.56–59. An ordination of the general capter of 1327, recalling a decision from 1324, reads like a commentary on this event: *ACG* (note 50), 2, 169.19–35; see also *ACG* 2, 152.10–22 (1324).

²⁸⁹ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56, 4°: 552.15–553.19.

²⁹⁰ "Quod familiaritates cum personis levibus et suspectis habere consuevit, quia iam actu est suspectus in Colonia multum de quadam iuvenacula paupere, que propter familiaritatem, quam habet de quodam seculari, vehementer habetur suspecta." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56, 554.78–555.81.

²⁹¹ "Propter quod etiam vere omnes meliores provincie Theothonie petiverunt a vicario generali provincie sepedicte quod excluderet eum de provincia." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56, 554.64 sq.

²⁹² "Ista sunt que habentur contra fratrem Guillelmum, socium predicti fratris Henrici... 3° In Colonia feminas suspectas consuevit visitare et cum eis familiaritates habere, ymmo etiam frequenter fuit cum quadam, que est concubina cuiusdam secularis, in cuius etiam domo... aliquociens pernoctavit." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56, 553.98 sq. & 553.106–109.

²⁹³ "9°... consuevit... per discursus superfluos ad leves feminas studium suum negligere et ordinis honestatem." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56, 556.131 sq.

²⁹⁴ "4°, quod contra preceptum actorum capituli provincialis inventus fuit infra septa cuiusdam monasterii monialium cum quadam moniali, quam consuevit regulariter visitare." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56, 555.110–112.

²⁹⁵ "9°, quod brigas et contentiones in omni loco, in quo fuit, consuevit suscitare." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56, 556.130.

²⁹⁶ "8°, quod vicario generali precipienti in Coloniensi conventu Predicatorum sub pena excommunicationis quod quilibet, qui aliquid sciret de illa materia, informaret eum de quibusdam, que pro honore ordinis ipsum scire expediebat, de quibus predicto fratri Guillelmo constabat, sicut fuit compertum postea et inventum, predictum vicarium minime informavit." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56, 556.124–129.

crimes, but could not provide proof.²⁹⁷ It would appear from later references that they—or Hermann alone in his notorious pamphlets—had listed incriminating propositions from the *Liber Benedictus*, the *Book of Divine Consolation*.²⁹⁸ Eckhart defended himself by sending a written reply, beginning with the word *Requisitus*, which is lost but can be reconstructed partially from his later defense.²⁹⁹ This defense apparently was accepted by Nicholas of Strasbourg, who found Meister Eckhart not guilty of the charge of heresy.

The document by Gerardus de Podhans witnesses a complex development. First, Hermann of Summo caused trouble spreading negative rumors and pamphlets—most likely among others about Meister Eckhart's alleged heretical sermons. When he was confronted about this at the provincial chapter he could not provide what the diffinitors, including his friend, the then provincial, Henricus de Gruningen, would consider as proof and was found to be a false accuser. During the visitation by Nicholas of Strasbourg he was found guilty of even more grave charges. At this moment William of Nideggen, convicted of infractions against the *vita regularis* too, associated with him, in turn sought to charge Meister Eckhart with the crime of heresy. But this was found to be without substance by the visitator, who also had the power to punish, by virtue of his papal mandate.³⁰⁰ As a consequence, William was removed from Cologne priory and assigned to Aachen. But he did not remain there quietly, and instead won over “a certain lewd and suspect friar and began to move around to different places.”³⁰¹

Hermann was punished by imprisonment in the priory jail (*carcer*).³⁰² What happened after this can be reconstructed from the documents with

²⁹⁷ “1^o, quod in loco iudicii proposuit <Guillelmus> contra magistrum Aycardum quod esset pertinax hereticus . . . quod quidem probare non potuit. 2^o, quod multa alia gravia contra eundem magistrum proposuit, que probare non potuit.” *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56, 555.100–105. Concerning Hermann during the visitation this is not explicitly said in Gerardus's accusation, but can be inferred from its general tenor: *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56, 554.72 sq.

²⁹⁸ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 45, 192 sq.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.* This contains his answers to six *articuli*.

³⁰⁰ Trusen (note 12), 64 sq. specifies that Nicholas's power was more extended than that of ordinary visitators, who may not punish but only report deviations, and that this was ordered directly by papal mandate.

³⁰¹ “6^o, quid postquam emissus fuit . . . de conventu Coloniensi et venisset ad conventum Aquensem, assumpsit ibi quendam fratrem levem et suspectum et cum illo, ut apostata, incepit vagare per diversas terras.” *Acta Echardiana* (note 2) no. 56: 556.116–118.

³⁰² In the accusation by Gerardus de Podhans this is only expressed indirectly: “ad subterfugiendum correctionem et disciplinam ordinis” (*Acta Echardiana*, note 2, no. 56.8^o,

somewhat less certainty but with conclusive direction even if an exact chronology of the events cannot be established. The wording of the accusation by Gerardus de Podhans, which rests on detailed reports by various German friars and as a legal document in the hands of the sovereign pontiff was constructed carefully so as not to contain refutable claims. It was William who addressed himself to the archbishop of Cologne accusing Meister Eckhart of heresy.³⁰³ According to our conjecture about this matter, he also liberated his accomplice Hermann from the priory jail (*carcer*), and nominated him as witness and co-accuser.³⁰⁴ They not only accused Meister Eckhart of heresy but also accused Nicholas of Strasburg as *fautor heresiae* on the basis that he had protected a heretic and persecuted the upright accusers.³⁰⁵ The acting Dominican procurator claimed that their accusations were motivated by their desire to escape punishment by the order.³⁰⁶ The archbishop commissioned *magister* Re(i)nher Friso³⁰⁷ and

553.39). We learn it from the papal letter to the archbishop of Cologne concerning the rehabilitation of Nicholas of Strasbourg, on 11 April 1331: "contigit quod idem Nicolaus quendam fratrem dicti ordinis in prefata provincia existentem exigentibus suis demeritis carceri mancipavit..." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 67, 605 sq., see 606.4–6. Sturlese thinks this was William of Nideggen, referring to *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 50, 535–37, see 536.39–42: "fratrem Wilhelmum de Nidecke semper liberum exhibui suis commissariis in pertinentibus ad eorum officium, in aliis autem etiam si ad suam appellasset audientiam vel ad suum forum pertinuisset, eximi non poterat a mei predicti vicarii potestate..." But just this very text shows: William was free and took the initiative to go to the archbishop's court (*Acta Echardiana*, note 2, no. 56: 556.120 sq.)—and thus liberated his accomplice from prison, who then joined him in the accusation (see 553.39 sq.).

³⁰³ "7^o, quod magistrum Aycardum apud commissarios domini Coloniensis de heresi, quantum potuit, infamavit ad hoc, ut sub isto pallio posset venire ad Curiam, et sic evaderet nostri ordinis disciplinam. Quare, cum venerit, supplico quod reddatur sui ordini puniendus." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56, 556.120–123. In this context William was also accused of having disclosed confidential matters of the order to outsiders: "11^o, quod multa de secretis ordinis contra preceptum vestri generalis vicarii secularibus revelavit." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56, 556.135 sq.

³⁰⁴ See note 302. Hermann's later appearance at court and his multi-role performance there is implied in the wording: "adiunxit se commissariis domini Coloniensis in facto inquisitionis contra magistrum Eycardum et aliquando gessit personam actoris, aliquando accessoris, aliquando testis." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56: 553.39–41. Besides it seems that he had not only William as complice, but even others "eum et suos complices." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56: 554.43.

³⁰⁵ Gerardus de Podhans charges Hermann with the following: "ipse cum quibusdam aliis dicitur procurasse... quod vicarius ille ex hoc et propter hoc, qui quendam fratrem pro suis gravibus excessibus puniaverat, denunciatus fuit excommunicationis sententiam incurrisse." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56: 553.43–46.

³⁰⁶ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56: 553.39 & 41–43 (Hermannus), 556.120–122 (Guillelmus).

³⁰⁷ Attested as *magister actu regens* at the Faculty of Theology at the University of Paris during the academic year 1318–19: Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 233, 1, 467. Mr Gilbert

the Franciscan Petrus de Estate, recently *custos*,³⁰⁸ as judges. Although in the dioceses of the Rhineland one finds an *officialis* as diocesan judge since the mid-13th century,³⁰⁹ a special judicial commission was set up by the archbishop, Henry II of Virneburg, to examine the case of Meister Eckhart.³¹⁰ Still, Sturlese and Flasch³¹¹ seem to imply that an organized special Inquisition already existed in the diocese. This special Inquisition, a mighty institution with its own personnel, did not yet exist.³¹² The mere unproven *infamatio* on the basis of negative rumors was not sufficient to start a procedure *ex officio*. Instead, as Trusen discovered, the process

Fournier recently found in Ms. Paris BNF lat. 15808, which Reinher had bequeathed to his old university, a copy of the papal bull *In agro dominico*.

³⁰⁸ The terms *custos* and *guardianus* were often used to name the moderator of a Franciscan house. Petrus de Estate OM is attested as a member of the Cologne Franciscan house in the 1330s. He died on 6 December 1336. Gabriel Löhr, "Die Mendikanten in den Kölner Schreinsbüchern," *Annalen des Historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein* 131 (1939), 1–33, see 11, no. 103. Before 14 January 1327, he was substituted by Albertus de Mediolano: see further below, note 356.

³⁰⁹ Winfried Trusen, *Anfänge des gelehrten Rechts in Deutschland: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Frührezeption* (Wiesbaden: 1962), 102 sq. and note 4; Trusen, "Die gelehrte Gerichtsbarkeit der Kirche," first published in *Handbuch der Quellen und Literatur der neueren europäischen Privatrechtsgeschichte*, vol. 1, *Mittelalter (1000–1500)*, ed. Helmut Coing, Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Europäische Rechtsgeschichte (Munich: 1973), 467–504; repr. Trusen, *Gelehrtes Recht im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit*, (Bibliotheca eruditorum) 23 (Goldbach: 1997), 343–80 (this edition is quoted), see 467–75.

³¹⁰ The text by Gerardus de Podhans (*Acta Echardiana*, note 2 above, no. 56, 556.120 sq.): [Guillelmus] "magistrum Aycardum apud commissarios domini Coloniensis de heresi, quantum potuit, infamavit" at first glance seems to insinuate that there would have been steady appointments of delegated judges by the archbishop, the qualification as *commissarii* shows that the two, neither of them a *doctor iuris*, had a special commission for this case. See also Eckhart in his *Responsio ad articulos sibi impositos: Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 48, 275.17 sq. On the limited power of *commissarii* concerning a definitive sentence on heresy for which consent of the archbishop would have been necessary, see Trusen (note 12), 77, note 57.

³¹¹ Loris Sturlese, "Die Kölner Eckhartisten" (note 206), 122; "Eckhart, l'inquisizione di Colonia" (note 256), 62; Kurt Flasch, *Meister Eckhart Philosoph* (note 38), 276 sq.

³¹² In Germany, the Inquisition in the sense of an institution and office of one permanent inquisitor for the entire country first came into existence in 1348: Klaus-Bernward Springer, "Dominican inquisition in the archdiocese of Mainz (1348–1520)," in *Praedicatorum Inquisitores*, vol. 1, *The Dominicans and the Mediaeval Inquisition*, (Acts of the 1st International Seminar on the Dominicans and the Inquisition, Rome, 23–25 February 2002) (Rome: 2004), 311–93; Springer, "Überblick über die dominikanische Inquisition im Erzbistum Köln und in Westfalen," *Europa und die Welt in der Geschichte*, (Festschrift Dieter Berg) (Bochum: 2004), 963–98; Dieter Kurze: "Anfänge der Inquisition in Deutschland," *Die Anfänge der Inquisition im Mittelalter*, ed. Peter Segl, Bayreuther Historische Kolloquien 7 (Köln: 1993), 131–85, shows that prior to this there were only some individual actions and there was no enduring organization.

was *per promoventem* by a private party.³¹³ Yet it was a lawsuit on heresy, which implied abbreviated legal proceedings with reduced rights of the accused.³¹⁴ This factor is of decisive importance for an understanding of the Cologne process against Meister Eckhart. The accusers had to provide the incriminating evidence themselves. We do not have documents from the first phase of this process. Trusen reconstructs them on the basis of the method of proceeding according to the general norms in force at that time.

The accusers made two attempts to bring the case against Eckhart. According to Trusen's reconstruction the accusers first tried the short way. Eckhart was, they said, in *mala fama* (bad reputation) of heresy, teaching and preaching knowingly what is not in accordance with Catholic doctrine, and holding his errors *pertinaciter* (obstinately). Heresy did not just consist in an erroneous opinion about matters of faith; it also implied proffering it knowingly and holding it persistently despite attempts to bring the erring person back to the orthodox expression.³¹⁵ But apparently the attempt to damn Eckhart by the short route did not succeed.³¹⁶ In any case, Hermann and William, and perhaps even others collaborating with them, produced a list of incriminated propositions: 15 of them taken from the *Liber Benedictus*, six from his defense *Requisitus* at that occasion, 12 from the first *Commentary on Genesis*, and 16 from sermons ascribed to Meister Eckhart.³¹⁷ This list was submitted to the court.

Reinherus Friso and Petrus de Estate summoned Meister Eckhart to appear in court. If we follow Trusen's hypothesis, he successfully defended himself by affirming that he was not in ill repute or teaching and preaching knowingly what is against the doctrine of the church, and not obstinately holding such errors, and by stating that the accusers could not provide sufficient and/or credible witnesses. Regardless of whether this

³¹³ Trusen (note 12), 76 sq. Koch (note 11), 328, misunderstands this decisive point assuming "we do not know which importance their <i.e. Hermann's and William's> statements really had." Still, Benoît Beyer de Ryke, *Maître Eckhart: un mystique de détachement* (Brussels: 2000), 29, supposes the archbishop as initiating a process *ex officio*.

³¹⁴ Trusen (note 12), 77–79.

³¹⁵ On the concept of heresy in historical perspective see Alfred Schindler in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. 14, ed. Gerhard Müller (Berlin: 1985), 318–41, in the 14th century, see 326–28. F.X. Lawlor in *NCE2* (note 134), 6, 769b–772a.

³¹⁶ Trusen (note 12), 79.

³¹⁷ Inferred from Eckhart's defense *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 48, 276.9–20. A reconstruction of the first list of incriminating propositions by Sturlese: no. 46, 197–226, for an important observation see 260 sq.

was the case the commissioners at a later moment handed him a copy of the first list with incriminating propositions.³¹⁸

This may have happened towards the end of 1325 or in early 1326. William of Nideggen, in direct contravention of an explicit prohibition, went to the Dominican general chapter during Pentecost 1326 at Paris.³¹⁹ This journey may have lasted more or less six weeks including the voyage to and from Paris. Yet it seems that he had no success there. On the contrary, the chapter issued two *ordinationes* that are likely to be related to the Meister Eckhart case. First, a friar “who charges another friar of a crime and discloses this to others, but not to his superiors, has to be punished adequately by his prior or his vicar, after this has been legitimately proven.”³²⁰ Remarkably, these are the very circumstances surrounding Hermann of Summo’s case.³²¹ Second, that “We strictly forbid that a friar who has accused a superior of our order or his vicar should withdraw the accusation himself before the <higher> superior has given his sentence.”³²²

The central document for our knowledge of the first phase of Meister Eckhart’s trial at the court of the archbishop of Cologne is a text found in the Latin manuscript no. 33 of the Soest municipal library, fol. 45ra–58ra.³²³ This book is composed of eight different parts containing 19 different works—some fragmentary.³²⁴ It is most likely that the first traceable

³¹⁸ Trusen (note 12) 79, see Eckhart’s defense, *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 48, 277.1–5.

³¹⁹ “10°, quod contra preceptum vicarii per sanctitatem vestram inibi positi ivit ad generalem capitulum Parisius celebratum.” *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56, 556.133 sq.

³²⁰ “Cum ex fratrum infamacionibus deus graviter offendatur et ordini turbacionis et scandali multiplex materia ministretur, volumus ac districte imponimus, quod quicumque crimen aliquod fratri alicui imposuerit vel aliis quibuscumque revelaverit, nisi forte suis superioribus deferendo, per priorem vel eius vicarium, postquam legitime constiterit, pena criminoso debita puniatur” *ACG* (note 50), 2, 165.10–15.

³²¹ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56, see 552.2–7.

³²² “Districte inhihemus, ne quando aliquem prelatum vel eius vicarium nostri ordinis contigerit accusari quacunque de causa vel deferri, pendente superioris iudicio, frater aliquis prelo huiusmodi vel vicario eius subiectus ab ipsius correctione discedat vel ipsum quacumque occasione quesita a sua communione suspendat. Lex enim ecclesiastica statuit, prelatum ab aliis accusatum, priusquam sub lite obiecta constiterint, non relinquere.” *ACG* (note 50), 2, 165.3–9. This text makes me assume that Nicholas had been accused before the general chapter at Pentecost 1326.

³²³ Bernd Michael, *Die mittelalterlichen Handschriften der Wissenschaftlichen Stadtbibliothek Soest* (Wiesbaden: 1991), 208–18; *Acta Echardi* (note 2) Appendix II: 355–509. Sturlese has—unusually and most usefully—supplemented his edition (275–354) with lists of the marginals consisting of corrections and glosses (368–400) and photos from the manuscript with synoptic quasi-diplomatic transcription (401–509).

³²⁴ Michael (note 323), 208–18 gives the identifications as far as possible. Seeing the characteristics of among others the handwriting between the second half of the 13th and

owner of this collection, the Dominican Fr Henricus (Schwefe) de Susato (ca. 1360, inquisitor at Cologne 1409–c.22, † ca. 1440)³²⁵ has linked them together.³²⁶ The fourth part, 14 leaves of parchment, contains a text which initially had been identified as Meister Eckhart's defense by Ludwig Keller (1849–1915).³²⁷ The first editor, the Benedictine Augustinus Daniels, saw it as a "copy of a document, which Eckhart presented to his judges at Cologne in the year 1326 for his self-defence"³²⁸ and therefore called it "Rechtfertigungsschrift." The Dominican Gabriel Théry, however, considered the text a later copy of the Master's documentation for his defense with two lists of incriminating articles "that came from different accusers working separately with different views and methods."³²⁹ Thus, it was characterized more as a dossier than as just one document. These lists were edited by Théry who arranged them in chronological order. He assumed they were constructed from single pieces.³³⁰ Joseph Koch also adopted this interpretation with the modification that he interpreted the date of 26 September 1326, mentioned in the "Rechtfertigungsschrift," as the first hearing at court.³³¹ Also, Winfried Trusen, the first scholar to examine the process documents in the light of the juridical procedures of *inquisitio*

the end of the 14th centuries in the different parts of the manuscript he supposes this "hints to origins from England (Northern-)France, and Western Germany in the perimeter of the Dominican *studia generalia* and the universities of Oxford, Paris and Cologne." See 210.

³²⁵ On Jacobus see *SOP* (note 40), 2, 243–346 and 4, 138; Josef H. Beckmann, *Studien zum Leben und literarischen Nachlaß Jakobs von Soest OP*, (Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens in Deutschland) 25 (Leipzig: 1929). A further work, not mentioned in *SOP*, is given by Johannes Meyer, who, however, did not see it himself: "scripsit de illustribus viris Ordinis Predicatorum a.d. 1407 ad 25tum magistrum ordinis, Leonhardum videlicet de Florencia, quem librum adhuc videre non merui" (Johannes Meyer, *Liber de viris illustribus Ordinis Praedicatorum V*, 14; ed. Paulus von Loë, *Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens in Deutschland* 12 (Leipzig: 1918), 62; Beckmann mentions it briefly. In this work, lost as it seems, we could perhaps find some more information on Meister Eckhart. See Beckmann, *Studien zum Leben*, 77.

³²⁶ Michael (note 323), 210. The comparison with Jacob's autographs in the handwriting in Soest Ms. 35 (Michael, 223–25), and Münster Wf., Universitätsbibliothek, Hs. 129 (Beckmann, note 325, 3), shows neither the writers nor one of the correctors as his hand.

³²⁷ Augustinus Daniels, *Eine lateinische Rechtfertigungsschrift des Meister Eckhart*, (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters 23, 5) (Münster: 1923), xiv; On Ludwig Keller (1849–1915), at the time of his discovery archivist at Münster Wf., see *BBKL* (note 44), 3 (1992), 1312–14.

³²⁸ Augustinus Daniels, *Eine lateinische Rechtfertigungsschrift*... (note 327), XVI.

³²⁹ Gabriel Théry: "Édition critique des pièces relatives au procès d'Eckhart contenues dans le manuscrit 33^b de la Bibliothèque de Soest," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 1 (1926–27), 129–268, see 139.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 157–268.

³³¹ Koch (note 11), 325.

haeriticae pravitatis of that time, considered the Soest text to be a series of documents: (1) the official act of the hearing on 26 September including Eckhart's response to the *articuli*; (2) the first list of incriminating propositions; (3) the *articuli* of the other *rotulus* (list); and (4) private notes prepared by the Meister for a subsequent hearing.³³² While preparing the critical edition for the *Acta Echardiana*, Loris Sturlese observed a mistake in the first list: what in the first list, as we have it in the "Rechtfertigungsschrift" to be art. 3 and 4, excerpted out of the first *Commentary on Genesis*, is in reality only one quotation and hence, according to Sturlese, is only one article.³³³ In view of this discovery and in the consideration that the opening part was missing those very elements that characterize an official notarial act,³³⁴ Sturlese concluded that the "Rechtfertigungsschrift" is based on private materials which Eckhart had composed in view of his future defense (i.e. before 26 September 1326). As an overview Sturlese gives the following scheme:³³⁵

No.	Content	Inc.	LW p.
<i>Rotulus primus, Responsio</i>			
1.	Introduction (explication, division, preliminary remark)	Anno domini...	275
2.	Statement on the propositions from <i>Liber Benedictus</i>	Ad primum...	280
3.	Statement on the propositions from the defense of the propositions from <i>Liber Benedictus</i>	Sequitur secundo...	286
4.	Statement on the propositions from <i>Expositio prima super Genesim</i>	Sequitur tertio...	288
5.	Statement on the propositions from German sermons	Porro de articulis...	293
6.	Propositions from <i>Liber Benedictus</i>	Isti sunt articuli... de libello...	305

³³² Trusen (note 12), 82 sq.

³³³ "Die Kölner Eckhartisten" (note 206), 125ff; Sturlese, *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), 260 sq.

³³⁴ Sturlese in *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), 263–65.

³³⁵ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), 251.

(cont.)

No.	Content	Inc.	LW p.
7.	Propositions from the defense of <i>Liber Benedictus</i>	Isti sunt articuli . . . de responsione	309
8.	Propositions from <i>Expositio prima super Genesim</i>	Isti sunt articuli de quodam libro	310
9.	Propositions from German sermons	Isti sunt articuli . . . de sermonibus	314
	<i>Rotulus secundus, Responsio</i>		
10.	Introduction to the second statement	Articuli qui Sequuntur . . .	318
11.	Statement on the propositions from the second list of German sermons	Primus articulus . . .	319
12.	Notandum	Postremo . . .	353

At first glance Sturlese's interpretation is completely convincing, and at second glance it remains compelling in most hypotheses. The Soest document is not a copy of the official court papers. Rather, it is a private copy made on the basis of Eckhart's personal documentation. The document as it is should be taken seriously since rearrangement of its content creates more problems than it solves. However, this conservation does not necessarily imply that its model was *one* document and was composed at *one* time. It has been written down later, perhaps even more than a decade after the process. But this character as a compilation, where materials of possibly different origin have been brought together in a unified style, makes it difficult—if not impossible—to judge on the original form and context of the texts.

The origin of numbers 6–9 in Sturlese's scheme can easily be determined. It is the content of the first list of incriminating propositions. Number 1, the Introduction, which is composed of explication, division, and preliminary remarks, does not seem to me as surely as it does to Sturlese to be a written preparation of a *future* protestation at court. Sturlese is completely right in that for it to be an official notarial act there are some important characteristics that should be present which are lacking in the text of this manuscript. It is in favor of Sturlese's reading as well that no mention is made of statements by other people. But is it really excluded that this part of the text, as we have it in Ms. Soest 33, is a résumé made by Eckhart himself or the unknown redactor on the basis of either an official

document or Eckhart's subsequent notes of the event, leaving aside juridical formulas that seemed inessential to him? I do not make this case as a convincing one, but I think that it could be so on basis of the evidence that we have.

Although Sturlese is convinced that Eckhart received this second list shortly before the hearing at court on 26 September, and answered to the charges in both lists on that one occasion, the possibility cannot be excluded that Eckhart had already conceived not only his written reply but had actually also answered the accusations found in the first list. Eckhart writes in the short introductory text of his responses to the second list: "The articles that follow are contained in a certain *rotulus*, which has been shown to me after I had answered to the articles already put above."³³⁶ A striking difference between the first and the second list is that the latter (included in no. 11), in most cases, contains precise identifications by the *incipits* of the sermons from which the incriminating propositions had been excerpted, whereas this is completely absent from the first list (no. 9). It is very unlikely that Eckhart himself would have supplied the identifications, taking over the business of his adversaries, but it is probable that the accusers did not succeed with some, the most heretically sounding articles of their first list since Eckhart denied their authenticity or at least their correct rendering.³³⁷ So they then tried to give more precise evidence of the origin of their incriminating propositions, wanting to make sure that the Meister would be nailed down to those very formulations, especially from recent sermons at some Cologne monasteries. This would imply, as Trusen had it,³³⁸ that the accused had replied to a first list arguing: "I mean none of those <propositions>, as they sound and imply what is wrong, error or heresy, nor did I mean and hold it, nor did I preach it."³³⁹ As a result of these critical reflections we have to leave open

³³⁶ "Articuli qui sequuntur continentur in quodam rotulo mihi exhibito, postquam responderam articulis iam supra posita." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2) no. 48, 2, 318.3 sq. [my translation].

³³⁷ "Porro de aliis articulis sedecim extractis ex sermonibus, qui mihi ascribuntur, respondere non haberem, cum passim et frequenter etiam a clericis studiosis et doctis deminute et falso quae audiunt reportantur." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 48.1.5: 293.18–20.

³³⁸ Trusen (note 12), 84. In favor of Trusen's view is the fact that Meister Eckhart argues in his appeal: "me . . . nimis diu circumduxistis impertinenter citando me nimis et ultra quam oportet," *Acta Echardiana* (note 2) no. 53, 545.24 sq.; see below note 365. Koch (note 11), 325, thinks 26 September would have been the first audit, but gives no reason for this.

³³⁹ "Hoc unum dico quod nullum eorum, sicut sonant et ut falsum implicant, errorem vel haeresim sapiunt, sentio nec sensui et tenui nec praedicavi." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 48.1.5, 293.20–22 [my translation].

whether there had been, as Trusen saw it, several hearings at court, the accusers producing successively a first and a second list and the Meister answering them separately, or whether Eckhart, as Sturlese puts it, would have received a second after a first list, but before he could have taken a position on it at court and would have prepared one reply on both lists.

On 26 September 1326, Eckhart defended himself in the presence of the commissioned judges. First he protests that according to the freedom and privileges of the Dominican order he is not required to appear at that court.³⁴⁰ The Meister here refers to the exemption of religious who are directly subjected to the pope and not submitted to diocesan courts—which would have been valid in disciplinary cases but not in the case of heresy.³⁴¹ The same is valid for Eckhart's protest that only the pope or the University of Paris can judge him.³⁴² This was founded on the privilege which Pope Urban IV had granted the university in 1263, stipulating that nobody may pronounce an excommunication, suspension of interdict on persons belonging to the university without special license from the Holy See.³⁴³ The very wording "if it would not touch faith, what should be far <from me, faith> which I have always confessed"³⁴⁴ shows that Eckhart is

³⁴⁰ "Primo protestor coram vobis... quod iuxta libertatem et privilegia ordinis nostri coram vobis non teneor comparere nec obiectis respondere." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 48.I.1, 275.11–14.

³⁴¹ Trusen, *Prozeß* (note 12), 92 sq., referring to the *Liber sextus* l. 5, tit. 2, c.17: *Corpus iuris canonici*, vol. 2, ed. Aemilius Friedberg (Leipzig: 1879), 1076. The appropriate text seems rather to be: l. 5, tit. 2, c. 11, § 2: "volumus, ut ea omnia viriliter exsequamini, ... contradictores per censuram ecclesiasticam appellare postposita compescendo, non obstantibus aliquibus privilegiis vel indulgentiis quibusunque personis cuiusvis conditionis, dignitatis vel gradus, religionis vel ordinis, comitatibus vel universitatibus civitatum et locorum specialiter vel generaliter sub quacunque verborum expressione vel forma a memorata sede concessis..." Ibid., 1074. The canonical foundation for the excommunication of Nicholas of Strasbourg is also expressed in this text.

³⁴² "Protestor autem quod de his et de omnibus, quae scripsi... <nec> coram vobis nec coram aliquo citra papam aut universitatem Parisiensem habeo respondere, nisi quod fortassis fidem, quod absit, tangeret quam semper protestor." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 48.I.4, 293.10–13. See Trusen, *Prozeß* (note 12), 93. In this context the exemption of the order is invoked again (293.14 sq.).

³⁴³ "auctoritate vobis presentium indulgemus ut nullus in universitatem magistrorum vel scolarium seu rectorem vel procuratorem eorum aut quemquam alium pro facto vel occasione Universitatis excommunicationis, suspensionis vel interdicti sententias audeat promulgare absque sedis apostolice licentia speciali, et si fuerit promulgata, ipso jure sit irrita et inanis." *CUP* (note 5), no. 383, 1, 427. Even before, in 1237, Pope Gregory IX had granted the university such a privilege, but at that time it was limited to seven years: *CUP* (note 5), no. 113, 1, 160. The "privilegium perpetuum apostolicum"—evidently that from 1263—figures also in an inventory of the Gallican nation's archives: *CUP* (note 5), no. 1028, 2, 489–92, see 491.

³⁴⁴ Latin text see note 343; my translation.

conscious of this exceptional situation. But if he would not have protested and would just have admitted the competence of this court, this would have created an important procedural disadvantage for himself.³⁴⁵ His objective, as we can gather from his words, was not to admit to a case of heresy. For this end, he affirms his good reputation free of any suspicion,³⁴⁶ and the malicious and untrustworthy character of the accusers.³⁴⁷ In case of an *ex officio* process with an inquisitor as an accuser, the tenor of what he said would have been suicidal: the unlearned accusers are not able to understand him, not even in plain theology.³⁴⁸ Furthermore, Meister Eckhart defends himself by saying that some of the theses from the sermons attributed to him are not his, and that another part is distorted by the unlearned accusers,³⁴⁹ and by asserting his readiness to correct errors which might be proven: "I can err, but I cannot be a heretic who is obstinate in his error."³⁵⁰ That the Cologne *commissarii* did not on the basis of this declaration change the process from a case of heresy to a case of censorship of possibly aberrant propositions is seen by Trusen as "the decisive objection against the lawfulness of the proceedings even if it complied with the usual rules of a canonical process on heresy."³⁵¹ After the hearing in September 1326 the accusers compiled a third list of allegedly heretical *articuli* extracted from Meister Eckhart's *Commentary on St John's Gospel*, and, either in this list or, as sometimes held, even in a fourth, some incriminating propositions from sermons, and from the *Commentary on the Book of Wisdom*.³⁵²

³⁴⁵ "Ubi acceptum est semel iudicium, ibi et finem accipere debet." *Digestae Iustiniani Augusti*, l. 5.1.30: De iudiciis ubi quisque agere vel conveniri debeat, Marcellus l. 1^o; ed. P. Bonfante (Milan: 1931), 150a; see Detlef Liebs, *Lateinische Rechtsregeln und Rechtssprichwörter* (Munich: 1982), 211, no. U1.

³⁴⁶ "praesertim cum non sim de haeresi notatus aut unquam fuerim infamatus teste omni vita mea et doctrina, acclamante opinione fratrum totius ordinis et populi utriusque sexus totius regni omnis nationis." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 48.I.1, 275.14–16; Trusen, *Prozeß* (note 12), 92 sq.

³⁴⁷ "commissio vobis facta . . . nullius est vigoris, utpote ex falsi suggestione, radice et arbore mala procedens." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 48.I.1, 275.17–19.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 48.I.1, 276.16–18; no. 48.I.2, 281.14 sq.; 284.8 sq.; see Trusen, *Prozeß* (note 12), 87 sq.

³⁴⁹ See above note 338 and note 340.

³⁵⁰ "Si quid tamen in praemissis aut in aliis dictis meis aut scriptis falsum esset, quod ego non video, semper paratus sum sensui cedere meliori . . ." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 48.I.1, 277.1 sq. "Errare enim possum, haereticus esse non possum. Nam primum ad intellectum pertinet, secundum ad voluntatem." *Ibid.*, 277.4 sq.; see Trusen, *Prozeß* (note 12), 87 sq.

³⁵¹ Trusen, *Prozeß* (note 12), 99 and above note 340.

³⁵² At least a third list can be reconstructed from the *Votum Avenionense: Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 49: *LW* V, 531–34.

The next preserved document does not tell us about a result of the examination of all or some of those propositions, but of a new development. Not only was Meister Eckhart himself under accusation, but the commissioned judges, on the proposal of Hermann or by him together with William, agreed to an accusation against Nicholas of Strasbourg as *fautor haeresiae* (favorer of heresy) at a date not precisely known.³⁵³ On 14 January 1327, Nicholas was summoned to the court, and appears accompanied by ten Dominicans, among them Hermann of Summo and William of Nideggen. By reading out a prepared text he raised the objection of non-competence and made an appeal to the Holy See.³⁵⁴ Until recently, no one questioned why he repeated this reading the next day at the residence of *magister* Reinher,³⁵⁵ and in the Franciscan friary where Albertus de Mediolano, *lector Coloniensis ordinis fratrum Minorum* lived. Albertus appears since 14 January in place of Petrus de Estate as second *commisarius*.³⁵⁶ Jürgen Miethke has given a probable explanation: on 14 January the *commissarii*, notwithstanding Nicholas's appeal, proceed to sentence Nicholas as *fautor haeresiae*. This had the immediate effect of his being excommunicated. Against this, Nicholas makes his second appeal the next day.³⁵⁷ This interpretation, however, meets the difficulty that after reading out the first appeal, Godeschalcus, the *officialis* of the archbishop, had accepted a copy of the *schedula* and thus officially taken note of the appeal,³⁵⁸ which meant that with this the process was deferred to the higher court.

³⁵³ See note 305. Still, on 11 April 1331, Pope John XXII asked the Cologne archbishop to revoke this sentence: *Acta Echardi* (note 2), no. 67, 605 sq.

³⁵⁴ Archivio segreto Vaticano: A.A., arm. C, no. 1118; *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 50, 535–37. The list of Dominican testimonies contains “Hermannus de Summo” twice (no. 4: 537.58 and no. 10: 537.60), thus creating the problem as to whether there would have really been two Dominicans with this very uncommon name or whether the *notarius* would have erroneously recorded the same person two times.

³⁵⁵ Archivio segreto Vaticano: A.A., arm. C, no. 1119; *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 51, 538–41.

³⁵⁶ Archivio segreto Vaticano: A.A., arm. C, no. 1120; *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 52, 541–44. On Albertus de Mediolano (or Mediolanensis) OFM see Lucas Wadding, *Annales Minorum seu trium ordinum a S. Francisco institutorum*, ad annum 1308, no. X, 3rd ed., vol. 6 (Quaracchi: 1931), 122 (1308 may not be taken as the date of Albert's death but is referring to John Duns Scotus); [Giovanni G. Sbaraglia] Jo. Hycinthii Sbaraleae: *Supplementum et castigatio ad scriptores trium ordinum S. Francisci a Waddingo aliusve descriptos*, pars 1 (Rome: 1908), 7b.

³⁵⁷ “Der Eckhartprozeß in Köln und Avignon” (note 257), 6, note 49, referring to the papal letter of 11 April 1331, asking the archbishop of Cologne to lift the sentence and excommunication of Nicholas of Strasbourg; see *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 67, 605 sq.

³⁵⁸ “Quibus lectis per eundem fratrem Nicholaum, dominus Godeschalcus, officialis predictus, petit sibi dari copiam premissorum prefigens ipsi appellanti terminum iuris ad

On 24 January 1327, on the liturgical feast of the *Cathedra Petri*, Meister Eckhart finally made his appeal to the Holy See. About this, as with Nicholas's appeal, we have a notarial document.³⁵⁹ On the morning of that day Meister Eckhart appeared in the room adjacent to the cathedral chapterhouse³⁶⁰ to stand before *magister* Reyner and *frater* Albert lector, now called *inquisitores*,³⁶¹ canon Godefried of S. Kuniberto,³⁶² the notaries Hermann *dictus Raze*,³⁶³ Bartholomew of Buchhorst,³⁶⁴ and a number of witnesses, to whom we shall come back a little later. Conrad of Halberstadt, usually considered his secretary, reads out the appeal expressly in Eckhart's name and by his power of attorney.³⁶⁵ The document read out was inserted into the notarial act of the appeal.³⁶⁶

The Meister complains about the unnecessarily lengthy process due to the excessive, useless citations on *articuli* which the inquisitors would

dandum et recipiendum apostolos super premissis" *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 50, 537, 52–4. *Officialis* is in this context the (chief) judge, acting in the name of the archbishop, see *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon minus*, vol. 2, ed. J.F. Niermeyer (Leiden: 2002), 960a, no. 3; Winfried Trusen, "Officialis," in *Handwörterbuch zur deutschen Rechtsgeschichte*, vol. 3, ed. Adalbert Erler (Berlin: 1984), 1214–18. For the juridical consequence of this demand see below, note 373.

³⁵⁹ Archivio segreto Vaticano: A.A., arm. C, no. 1121; *Acta Echardiana* (note 2) no. 53, 544–47.

³⁶⁰ "in camera sita apud locum capitularem inferiorem ecclesiae Coloniensis, hora post missam pro defunctis." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 53, 546.74 sq.

³⁶¹ "in presentia venerabilium virorum magistri Reyneri, doctoris sacre scripture, et fratris Alberti, lectoris in domo fratrum Minorum Coloniensi, inquisitorum a reverendo... domino Henrico, sancte Coloniensis ecclesiae... specialiter deputatorum." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 53, 544.2–6.

³⁶² *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 53, 546.68.

³⁶³ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 53, 544.6 sq.; 547.85. Evidently Hermannus is acting.

³⁶⁴ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 53, 547, 92. Bartholomaeus is testifying.

³⁶⁵ "religiosus vir frater Conradus de Halferstat, ordinis Predicatorum domus Coloniensis, de expresso mandato, voluntate, iussu et ratihabitione ac nomine venerabilis et religiosi viri magistri Eckardi, de ordine Predicatorum, doctoris sacre theologie, presentis, volentis, mandantis ac ratum habentis, quandam cedulam sive cartam, quam in manibus tenebat, in scriptis de verbo ad verbum legit et per eam sanctam sedem apostolicam appellavit seque subiecit collectioni eiusdem sedis et apostolos cum instantia petivit." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 53, 545.10–16. On Conrad of Halberstadt senior, who in 1321 had been *diffinitor* of Saxonia at the general chapter, and Conrad of Halberstadt junior, who was lector of the Magdeburg *studium generale* in 1342, see *SOP* (note 40), 1, 276–78; 2, 61 sq.; Erwin Rauner, *Konrads von Halberstadt OP "tripartitus moralium": Studien zum Nachleben antiker Literatur im späteren Mittelalter*, 2 vols, *Europäische Hochschulschriften* 1, 1112 (Frankfurt am Main: 1989). Kaeppli (*SOP* 1, 276) thinks the junior may have been present in Cologne in 1327; Rauner, however, (1, 25) sees there the senior Conrad of Halberstadt, as does Reiner Lang, in *Konrad Von Halberstadt OP, Chronographia Interminata*, 1277–1355/59, *Wissenliteratur im Mittelalter* (Wiesbaden: 1996), 5 sq.

³⁶⁶ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 53, 545.19–546.67. That the two notaries are named in it (546.66 sq.) points to completion only a short time before reading it out.

have falsely" thought aberrant from Catholic faith, tarnishing his reputation and that of his order, which had never been denigrated in such a manner. The whole process could have already ended before the middle of the previous year.³⁶⁷ He has "always and repeatedly presented his readiness to obey the law and the holy church if he would have lost the <right> way in something, provided that my error has been pronounced and recognized legitimately."³⁶⁸ The inquisitors, however, have ignored this and avoided any juridical decision, "but only willfully or even more with criminal intent you lead me around in a circle ambushing me trying to trap me and with the greatest scandal by prejudicing the state of my person and my order."³⁶⁹ The inquisitors even assigned more credibility to suspected and delinquent Dominican brothers, who wanting to escape correction, have calumniated him, rather than to his innocence and purity.³⁷⁰ Furthermore, Eckhart's case has already been treated by Nicholas of Strasbourg, and thus the new process is unlawful.³⁷¹ For all these reasons the Meister believed that he was unjustly treated. This belief prompted him to appeal to the Holy See.³⁷² Godefried of S. Kuniberto answers on behalf

³⁶⁷ "me...nimis diu circumduxistis impertinenter citando me nimis et ultra quam oporteret super articulis, quos reputabatis in fide erroneos, cum non essent, infamantes me et ordinem meum, qui nunquam a tempore sue foundationis nec in aliquo magistro sacre scripture vel in aliquo simplici fratre in provincia Theutonie fuit de heresi infamatus, ... cum iam dudum ante anni medietatem potuissetis totum processum vestrum in me terminasse..." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 53, 545.24-30.

³⁶⁸ "semper et frequenter me optuli pariturum iuri et ecclesie sancte dei, si forsan in aliquo contra ipsam deviassem, dummodo pronunciatum et cognitum de errore meo fuisset legitime." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 53, 545.33-35.

³⁶⁹ "nec decernitis aut pronunciatitis aut refertis cum effectui iuris me teneri vel non in premissis, sed sola voluntate vel potius temeritate me circumducitis et circumvenitis notorie, periculose et cum maximo scandalo in preiudicium status mei et ordinis mei." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 53, 545.38-42.

³⁷⁰ "Et ad infamandum me amplius advocatis frequenter fratres mei ordinis suspectos...qui propter notam excusum turpitudinis propriorum id procurarent apud vos, incorrigibiles esse volentes super suis excessis...ipsos fovetis impossibiliter...quorum dictis falsis magis innitimini, quam mee innocentie et puritati." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 53, 545.42-546.48.

³⁷¹ "de predictis articulis vel eorum similibus iam dudum ante cognitum fuerit sufficienter et pertinenter discussum per religiosum virum fratrem Nicholaum, vicarium auctoritate domini summi pontificis speciali, nec de eodem pluries debeat inquiri propter premissa, sicut dicunt iura." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 53, 546.53-57; there reference to Pope Gregory IX: "De his criminibus, de quibus absolutus est accusatus, non potest accusatio explicari." *Decretales* l. V, tit. 1, c. 6: ed. Friedberg (note 341), 2, 734; "Bona fides non patitur ut bis in idem exigatur" was already a principle of Roman law: *Digestae* (note 345), l. 50, tit. 17, c. 57, 1557a.

³⁷² "Ideo ex premissis sentiens me per vos gravatum et per vos gravari posse amplius et ordinem meum predictum, sanctam sedem apostolicam appello in hiis scriptis subiciens

of the two inquisitors that they will give Eckhart the *apostoli* within the time fixed by law.³⁷³

There was a remarkable list of witnesses:

- The leading Carmelites, Fr Sibertus de Beka, provincial of the *Alemannia inferior*, who had been one of the theologians entrusted by the pope with the examination of Marsilius de Padova's *Defensor pacis*,³⁷⁴ Fr Henricus de Aquileia, *Bacc. theol.*, Fr Johannes Vogele, *magister*, and Fr Tilmannus de Lutzelnburch, lector of the *Sentences*.³⁷⁵
- Fr Hugo, the *lector principalis*, and Fr Johannes de Moirsberg of the Augustinians.³⁷⁶

me correctioni eiusdem in premissis et apostolos cum instantia peto iterum ac iterum." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 53, 546.59–62. The expression "apostolos cum instantia peto iterum ac iterum" sounds like a dramatic repetition of this demand, but it is just a juridical formula: see Trusen (note 12), 109.

³⁷³ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 53, 546.68–73. The letter which the judge(s) of the court from which an accused made appeal to a higher court had to give to the demander were called *Apostoli*: "Ab eo, a quo appellatum est, ad eum appellatione cogniturus est, litterae dimissoria diriguntur, quae vulgo apostoli apellantur." *Decretum Gratiani*, pars II, causa II, q. 6, c. 24: Friedberg (n. 341) I, col. 473; A. Amanieu in *Dictionnaire du Droit canonique*, vol. 1, ed. R. Naz (Paris: 1935), 693–98. Among other sorts there were *apostoli dimissorii* "by which the judge transmisses simply the appeal accepted by him" (Amanieu, *ibid.*, 693, 1°) and the *apostoli refutatorii* which express the judge's opinion that the appeal is not sufficiently founded. However, even in this case he cannot prevent the appeal (*ibid.*, 3°). If the judge refuses to give the demander *apostoli* a notary can dress up *apostoli testimoniales* attesting this fact and so rendering the appeal possible for the accused even with an uncooperative or unattainable judge (*ibid.*, 4°). The time fixed for giving the *apostoli* was 30 days: *Liber sextus Decretalium*, l. II, tit. 15, c. 6: Friedberg (note 341), 1017. See F. Merzbacher, "Apostelbrief," *Handwörterbuch zur deutschen Rechtsgeschichte*, vol. 1, ed. Adalbert Erler (Berlin: 1971), 195 sq. (who however misunderstands the time for asking and for receiving the *apostoli* as time for submitting the appeal); Adolf Berger, *Encyclopedic dictionary of Roman law*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society NS 43, 2 (Philadelphia: 1953), 566b.

³⁷⁴ Franz-Bernhard Lickteig, *The German Carmelites at the medieval universities*, (Textus et studia historica Carmelitana) 13 (Rome: 1981), 35. Lickteig erroneously presents Sibertus as presiding the session—supposedly because he is the first person named. However, in the act we read: "presentibus venerabilibus viris et religiosis magistro Siberto, provinciali . . ." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 53, LW V, 546.75 sq. The first position is due to the *praecedentia* of Sibertus as the highest ranking witness.

³⁷⁵ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 53: LW V, 546.76–547.79. The curious order may be due to a higher function of Henry of Aquila. Another Cologne Carmelite, who was not (yet) present there, is quite likely to have heard Meister Eckhart teaching during his second Parisian *magisterium*, namely, Johannes Walrami de Sublobiis, who was a Parisian student in 1312–15, and, after having been provincial of *Alemannia superior* 1318–27, was prior of the Cologne Carmelites: Adalbert Deckert, "P. Johannes Walrami de Sublobiis O.Carm. ein Sohn der Stadt Köln," *Carmelus* 50 (2003), 179–81.

³⁷⁶ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 53: 547.79 sq.

- Fr Lambertus, lector, and Fr Romanus of the Franciscans.³⁷⁷
- Some unnamed “trustworthy witnesses, who had been asked to be present.”³⁷⁸

From the *Fratres Praedicatores*, however, only Hermann of Summo, Eckhart's principal adversary, and the two witnesses required *ad minimum*, here Johannes Juvenis and Johannes de Tambaco, are given in the document.³⁷⁹ It is striking that no leading Dominican was present, whereas the other mendicant houses of studies sent their *lectores*. Evidently, the Friars Preachers did not want to give too much importance to this event in contrast to the appeal of Nicholas of Strasbourg ten days earlier. It can hardly be imagined that this was just by chance and not part of a strategy to show just minimal consideration for that court and to do no more than what was demanded by the law: to appeal in due form demanding the *apostoli*.³⁸⁰ The text of the appeal contains—different from the “Rechtfertigungsschrift” from September—severe personal attacks against the commissioned judges (and expressly not against the archbishop). This clearly shows that Eckhart supposes the commissioned inquisitors would erroneously think that some of the incriminating propositions are heretical and not consider his readiness to submit himself to the church. He evidently does not expect a fair continuation of the trial. The very fact of the appeal was of major juridical importance.³⁸¹

On 13 February 1327, following his sermon in the Cologne Dominican church, Meister Eckhart had Conrad of Halberstadt read out a Latin document which he translates “point by point” into German and explains it to

³⁷⁷ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 53: 547.80 sq.

³⁷⁸ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 53: 547.83 sq.

³⁷⁹ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 53: 547.82 sq. At the appeal of Nicholas of Strasbourg on 14 January, however, nine or ten Dominicans were present including the prior Johannes de Gryfenstein and the three named here (see above note 354). The order between them is reversed here; as the *praecedentia* is usually obeyed, this points to the less careful work of either Johannes Hesiani or Hermann Raze as notary. Johannes de Tambaco (1288–1372) became *magister theologiae* in 1347 and in 1350 was elected provincial of the Teutonia. He was sympathetic to Meister Eckhart's work and was a friend of Henry Suso. See SOP (note 40), 2, 400–05 and 4, 147. In view of his academic career he may have been *magister studentium* of the Cologne *Studium generale*. Johannes Juvenis is known only from this document and the one from 14 January.

³⁸⁰ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 53: 545.16. On *Apostoli* see note 373 above.

³⁸¹ Trusen (note 12), 99–102. Miethke (note 257), 123, and Koch (note 11) thought an appeal could not have been made before the court would have pronounced a sentence, but Trusen (102 sq.) has shown that in a process on heresy this was possible only before a sentence.

the public.³⁸² The notary present, Wolterus de Ketwich, recorded the acts of the event and inserted the Latin document.

I Meister Eckhart, doctor of sacred theology declare before anything else invoking God as witness that that I have always detested any error in faith and all deviant behaviour...if something erroneous may be found in the foresaid < matters > having been written or said or preached by me, openly or privately, in what time or place whatsoever, directly or indirectly, out of less good understanding or to be reproved, I expressly revoke publicly all and every single sentence of this in front of you who are present, because I from now on want to have it held as not said or written by you because I hear I have been understood wrongly.³⁸³

This inserted text of the original document found in the Vatican presents the particular difficulty that it does not have the concluding formula which is customarily found in such documents and by which its conclusion would be clearly marked. So we remain uncertain whether the following three points are still part of the inserted document or belong to Eckhart's German explication translated into Latin by the notary.³⁸⁴

³⁸² "ipso sermone finito idem magister vocavit ad se fratrem Conradum de Halverstat dicti ordinis, mandavit illi, ut cartam, quam in manu sua portabat infrascriptam nomine suo et pro ipso magistro distincte ad intellectum legeret coram populo ibidem presente. Et quam primum idem frater unum articulum sive punctum de contentis in ipsa carta legerat, predictus magister illum in materna lingua populo intellective de verbo ad verbum exposuit." *Archivio segreto Vaticano*: A.A., arm. C, no. 1123; *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 54: *LW V*, 547–49, see 548.7–13.

³⁸³ "Ego magister Ekardus, doctor sacrae theologie, protestor ante omnia deum invocando in testem quod omnem errorem in fide et omnem deformitatem in moribus semper [fui], in quantum michi possibile fuit, sum detestatus, cum huiusmodi errores statui doctoratus mei et ordinis repugnarent et repugnent. Quapropter, si quid erroneum repertum fuerit in premissis scriptum per me, dictum vel predicatum, palam vel occulte, ubicumque locorum vel temporum, directe vel indirecte, ex intellectu minus sano vel reprobato, expresse hic revoco publice coram vobis universis et singulis in presentiarum constitutis, quia id pro non dicto vel scripto ex nunc haberi volo; specialiter etiam, quia male intellectum me audio." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 54: *LW V*, 548.19–27 [my translation]. In the original, *theologie* in place of *theologie* (*Acta*, 548.19); [fui] in the original deleted (548.21).

³⁸⁴ Both editors, Marie-Hyacinth Laurent, "Autour du procès de Maître Eckhart: les documents des Archives Vaticanes," *Divus Thomas* [Piacensis] 39 (1936), 331–48 and 430–47, see 344–46, and Sturlese, *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 54, 548.19–549.40, seem to assume the whole text "Ego magister Ekardus...habet intellectum minus sanum" was in the written document handed over to the notary. Trusen, however, seems to consider the latter part (from *Acta*, 548–48 onwards) as a summary of what the Meister had said "by the notarius, who even if versed in the law was not well versed in theology" (note 12), 104, an opinion which Ruh, *Meister Eckhart* (note 28, 192 sq.) already held. I think it is less likely, but cannot be excluded completely.

1. "I would have preached my little finger created everything. I did not understand this and did not say it as the words sound. But said <this> of the fingers of the small boy Jesus."³⁸⁵
2. "And that something would be in the soul, if it <the soul> would be totally like that, the soul would be uncreated. <This> I understand also as true according to my colleagues the *doctores*, if the soul were essentially intellect."³⁸⁶
3. "And I also never said, as far as I know, nor meant, that something would be in the soul, something of the soul that would be uncreated and cannot be created, because then the soul would be pieced together out of <what is> created and <what is> uncreated. I have written and taught the contrary unless somebody would like to say 'uncreated,' or 'not created,' that is, 'not created by itself,' but rather 'concreated'."³⁸⁷

At the end of the text, whether inserted or summarily reported by the notary, Meister Eckhart affirms again that he is ready "to correct and revoke whensoever and as often as this would be appropriate everything that could be found as having a less good understanding."³⁸⁸

Now, in striking difference to the preceding appeal, ten leading Cologne Dominicans are present as witnesses but not the enemies of Eckhart. Besides the local prior Johannes de Gryfenstein, Rytholphus de Elz,

³⁸⁵ "Quod ego predicaverim <a> minimum meum digitum creasse omnia, quia illud non intellexi nec dixi, prout verba sonant, sed dixi de digitis illius parvi pueri Ihesu." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 54.(1): *LW V*, 548.28–30. Not found in Eckhart's sermons (*Acta*, note 2). Whereas Koch (note 11, 333) calls this "a childish defence" I rather think it fits into Eckhart's rhetorics of startling paradoxes.

³⁸⁶ "et quod aliquid sit in anima, si ipsa tota esset talis, ipsa esset increata, intellexi verum esse et intelligo etiam secundum doctores meos collegas, si anima esset intellectus essentialiter." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 54.(2): *LW V*, 548.31–33. Sturlese there refers to numbers 17 and 18 of the second list of incriminated propositions (*Acta Echardiana*, no. 48, 321.22–322.3) concerning the sermon "Impletum est tempus Elizabeth" (*DW I*, Pred. 11, 175–89).

³⁸⁷ "Nec etiam unquam dixi, quod sciam, nec sensi, quod aliquid sit in anima, quod sit aliquid anime quod sit increatum et increabile, quia tunc anima esset peciata ex creato et increato, cuius oppositum scripsi et docui, nisi quis vellet dicere: increatum vel non creatum, id est non per se creatum, sed concreatum." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 54.(3): *LW V*, 549.34–37. Sturlese refers to the above quoted no. 18 again. In his "Rechtfertigungsschrift" Eckhart stresses the *increatum* as *coniunctivus irrealis* (322.1–3). The same problem returns in art. 4 of the *Votum Avenionense* (*Acta* no. 59.<4>, 572.15–573.2) and art. 27 of *In agro dominico* (*Acta* no. 65, 599.91 sq.).

³⁸⁸ "Salvis omnibus corripo et revoco, ut premisi, corrigam et revocabo in genere et in specie, quandocumque et quotienscumque id fuerit oportunitate, quecumque reperiri poterunt habere intellectum minus sanum." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 54: *LW V*, 549.38–40.

another prior, the Koblenz lector, Otto de Schowemburg, Bruno Scherfgin, Arnoldus de Leyen, Jacobus de Frankinstein, Godefridus Niger, Lodevicus de Porta Martis, Johannes de Duren, and Theodericus de Wormacia are named and in addition to these, a secular priest, Albertus, and two Cologne citizens, Gobelinus de Udinchoven, and Hermannus who lives on "Breite Straße."³⁸⁹

There are diverse interpretations of Eckhart's public self-defense. Joseph Koch, the general editor of Meister Eckhart's Latin works, saw it negatively: "In my opinion this declaration is the most embarrassing document of the whole process. It is a flight into the public realm (resorting to the court of public opinion) which could not have had a positive effect in any direction: the judges heard he was not ready to revoke his errors which they ascribed him, the people could not understand the explanation . . . Eckhart's friends had to ask themselves why such a sudden step."³⁹⁰ Kurt Ruh found: "Whether this appearance was well reflected and prepared by Eckhart, whether it was prudently staged as tactics in the trial-process, whether it would have additionally damaged him or not—all this may be left open. It is sufficient that to Eckhart as preacher it seemed necessary."³⁹¹ As all authors before them, both only had Laurent's edition at their disposal and lacked specific knowledge of the procedural laws of that time. Their view was based on present-day general assumptions on juridical procedures, so that they misinterpreted some decisive characteristics, most notably the public scene of 13 February 1327. The back page of the original document in the Vatican Archives, not given by Laurent, tells us how it was understood in Avignon: "Revocation of <that> which he said against the faith."³⁹²

Looking precisely at the document and its formulations, we see that it is a conditional revocation. Meister Eckhart affirms, as he had already done in September and January, his fidelity to Catholic faith, his readiness to revoke anything that would be found erroneous or—now a new qualification—that which would be found possibly misunderstood in a bad sense. He refutes three misunderstandings of his doctrine, but he does not concede that he actually had erred. The text of the document from

³⁸⁹ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 54: LW V, 549, 41–47.

³⁹⁰ Koch (note 11), 332 sq.

³⁹¹ Ruh, *Meister Eckhart* (note 28), 185.

³⁹² "Revocatio que contra fidem dixit." *Archivio segreto Vaticano*: A.A., arm. C, no. 1120 verso; *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 54: 549:56.

13 February, moreover, is not just an explanation which the Meister gave to his friends and his audience, but it was an absolute necessity considering procedural law in transition which still contained elements of Germanic laws, namely the *Purgatio canonica* or oath of purification. Not to take this oath would have been equivalent to admitting the crime of which somebody was accused.³⁹³ Eckhart made this public declaration as a procedural necessity. He took the occasion to affirm his will to maintain the faith, to make his submission to the church, and to explain some misunderstood points of his teaching. The notice on the back page of the notarial document shows us that the public declaration of faith did not fail its canonical effect at Avignon.

The last time we meet Meister Eckhart at Cologne is on 22 February 1327, when he first went to the *armarium* of the archiepiscopal curia or the cathedral to receive the *apostoli* accompanied by the prior Johannes de Gryfenstein, Fr Otto of Schowemburg and Fr Conrad of Halberstadt.³⁹⁴ There he meets Magister Reynerus who reads him the text of the written denegation of the *apostoli*:

We have arrived at the decision not to concede the *apostoli* concerning the appeal . . . because this is evidently frivolous, as follows manifestly from the acts of the inquisition because of heresy pending against the same Meister Eckhart. This is our answer which we give him in place of the <positive> *apostoli* and mandate you notaries to make up a public document on this concession of <negative> *apostoli*.³⁹⁵

The notary Bartholomew of Buchhorst takes the acts and inserts the written document while the notary Hermann called Raze along with the

³⁹³ Trusen, *Der Prozeß* (note 12), 105–08; Trusen, “Der Inquisitionsprozeß,” first published in *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Kanonistische Abteilung* 74 (1988), 168–210; repr. W. Trusen, *Gelehrtes Recht* (note 309), 81–143 (this edition quoted), see 89–97; E. Kaufmann, “Reinigungseid,” in *Handwörterbuch* (note 358), 4 (1990), 837–40.

³⁹⁴ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 55<a>: 550 sq. The witnesses: 551.25–27. The orthography of their names is fluent, to show the identity of the concerned persons I remain with the variant encountered first. *Armarium* is here not the arsenal, but the room for the archives of either the cathedral or the archiepiscopal curia just opposite the south side of the cathedral (then still under construction).

³⁹⁵ “Appellationi magistri Eckardi, quam nuper coram et a nobis interposuit, tanquam frivole evidenter, ut ex actis coram nobis in causa inquisitionis super heresi contra eundem magistrum Eckardum pendentis actitatis liquet manifeste, non duximus deferendum, hanc nostram responsionem ipsi loco apostolorum concedentes et mandamus vobis tabelionibus, ut super hac apostolorum concessione nobis faciatis publicum instrumentum.” *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 55: 550.19–24.

Dominicans acted as a witness.³⁹⁶ Then Eckhart, his Dominican brothers, and the two notaries went to the Franciscan house where they were to meet Albertus de Mediolano in the chapterhouse, together with some other Franciscans, the guardian Johannes, the penitentiary Romanus, the vice-guardian Johannes, Conradus de Astis, and Johannes de Juliaco.³⁹⁷ There we have the same course of events: Albert reads an identical text,³⁹⁸ but in contrast with the first meeting, it is now mentioned that he gives it to Eckhart.³⁹⁹ Winfried Trusen has explained that negative *apostoli* juridically function in such a way that even considering an appeal as unfounded, the judges could not prevent it. However, in the case of heresy it had to be made before a sentence would have been pronounced. The *apostoli* testify whether the judges of the lower court consider an appeal as well founded or not and they should be accompanied by the necessary documents as basis for the examination by the court of a higher jurisdiction.⁴⁰⁰

Soon after this, Meister Eckhart and Nicholas of Strasbourg traveled to Avignon accompanied by the German provincial, Henricus de Cigno and two or three *lectores*⁴⁰¹ because an appeal had to be submitted to the higher court within a reasonable delay for the journey.⁴⁰² Nicholas then continued to Pepignan where the Dominican general chapter was taking place during the week from Pentecost of 1327 onwards. He had been elected *diffinitor* of Teutonia—at the provincial chapter in September 1326.⁴⁰³ Two *ordinationes* of the general chapter have direct relation to the case of Meister Eckhart. The first reads:

Whosoever in our order may be found to live a strange, in some way vicious life against the general form of life long since approved by the order, should

³⁹⁶ Bartholomeus de Buchhorst (*Acta Echardiana* no. 55: 550.7), Hermannus dictus Raze (551.30). On 24 January it was the other way round (*Acta*, no. 53: 544.7 and 547.85 + 92). Both seem to have been notaries of confidence to the archiepiscopal curia.

³⁹⁷ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 55: 551.29–49. The list of the witnesses (551.45–49). Johannes viceguardianus (551.46 sq.) seems to be the same as Johannes de Colonia, witnessing on 15 January (*Acta* no. 52, 543.91).

³⁹⁸ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 55: 551.38–43.

³⁹⁹ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2) no. 55: 551.35–37.

⁴⁰⁰ Trusen, *Der Prozeß* (note 12), 102–04. See also note 373.

⁴⁰¹ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56, 553.48–554.49. One of the three may have been Nicholas of Strasbourg.

⁴⁰² “Post hoc <receptionem apostolorum> appellatori secundum locorum distantiam, ... principales personae per se, vel per procuratores instructos cum mandato ad agendum et cum rationibus et munimentis ad causam spectantibus, accedant ad sedem apostolicam.” *Liber sextus Decretalium*, l. 2, tit. 15, c. 1: Friedberg (note 341), 1014.

⁴⁰³ This was used against Pope John XXII in the *Appellatio maior* by the Franciscan minister generalis Michael de Cesena on 18 September 1328: see note 412.

first be admonished, and, if they would not correct themselves, should be sent to different priories; and if they would persist in their way, they should be confined to prison by the provincial prior or the provincial chapter.⁴⁰⁴

By the second *ordinatio* the prohibitions were reiterated concerning disrespect to an acting superior or vicar, even when he would be under accusation,⁴⁰⁵ bringing a friar into ill repute,⁴⁰⁶ and going to the master of the order without consent of the proper provincial prior or to the provincial prior without the consent of the proper conventual prior. The relative punishments were restated.⁴⁰⁷

All this could be said of the two slanderous informers living outside the priory. The last prohibition mentioned particularly concerns Hermann of Summo who not only moved about the Rhineland region,⁴⁰⁸ but also went to the master of the order, Barnabas de Vercellis, and denounced Eckhart and Nicholas while he was at the Roman curia in Avignon.⁴⁰⁹ This was roughly a two-month journey, which is said to have occurred "recently." After the general chapter the acting procurator of the Dominican order, Fr Gerardus de Podhans, accused Hermann of Summo and William of Nideggen before Pope John XXII.⁴¹⁰ He demanded that they

⁴⁰⁴ "Quicumque in nostro ordine inventi fuerint singularem vitam quocumque modo viciosam ducentes et contra communem modum vivendi diu ab ordine approbatum, primo admoneantur, et si admoniti correcti non fuerint, separentur et in diversis conventibus ponantur; et si in eodem persistent, per priorem provinciale vel provinciale capitulum carcerali custodie mancipentur." *ACG* (note 50), 2, 169.7–12.

⁴⁰⁵ *ACG* (note 50), 2, 170.32–34; referring to 165.3–9.

⁴⁰⁶ *ACG* (note 50), 2, 170.34–171.1; referring to 165.10–15.

⁴⁰⁷ "Renovamus ordinacionem factam in precedenti immediate capitulo generali de non vitandis prioribus vel eorum vicariis, pendente superiorum iudicio; et ordinacionem facta de diffamatoribus et de pena adiecta ibidem; et ordinacionem factam in capitulo generali Florencie celebrato de non eundo ad magistrum ordinis sine sui prioris provincialis nec ad priorem provinciale sine sui prioris conventualis licentia cum penis ibidem adiectis." *ACG* (note 50), 2, 170.32–171.4; this last *ordinacio* was issued in 1321: see 131.1–9.

⁴⁰⁸ Gerardus de Podhans complains: "9°, quod nuper, cum vagaretur contra hobedienciam ordinis per plures septimanas in territorio Coloniensi et non sine scandalo plurimorum et fuisset citatus per preceptum et sub pena gravioris culpe, non comparuit, sed priori Traiectensi, qui citationem illam sibi legerat, verba comminatoria multa dixit et eum cum irreverentia pertractavit." *Acta Echardi* (note 2), no. 56, 554, 51–55.

⁴⁰⁹ "7°, quia cum nuper timeret quod pro culpis istis et multis aliis deberet puniri per vicarium Theothonie, contra mandatum sui prioris quasi furtive fugit et sine licentia cuiuscumque ivit ad magistrum ordinis. Et apud eum vicarium suum quantum potuit nusus est diffamare, et in curia Romana fecit etiam illud idem." *Acta Echardi* (note 2), no. 56, 553.34–38. *Nuper* "recently" is said after Pentecost 1327. In favor of a late dating is also the passage: "ymmo dicunt prefati fratres [prior provincialis et 3 lectores presentes in curia] quod littere, que per eum sunt aportate, sunt mendicate et per vias diversas et mirabiles procurate." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56, 554.49 sq.

⁴¹⁰ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56, 552–56.

be imprisoned and that they should be handed over to their superiors for adequate punishment.⁴¹¹ Indeed, as we learn from Michael de Cesena, at least one of them, most likely Hermann, was imprisoned at the papal curia.⁴¹²

Meanwhile the pope established a commission of theologians. On the basis of Eckhart's oath of purification its task was no longer that of an inquiry about the heresy of the person, but of a determination as to whether the incriminated propositions (as they were enunciated and heard) would be in contradiction to Catholic doctrine. We do not know the identity of its members. Among the 13 cardinals (before the consistory on 18 December 1327)⁴¹³ the masters of theology were the most probable candidates, which would suggest the Dominican William Peter Godin, cardinal since 1312,⁴¹⁴ and the Franciscans Vital Du Four, cardinal since 1312, and who, however, died on 16 August 1327,⁴¹⁵ and Bertrand de Turré, cardinal since 1320.⁴¹⁶

But it is not certain at all whether a commission of cardinals was immediately occupied with the case. It is likely that the *magister sacri Palatii*, who was the theological teacher and counselor at the papal curia,⁴¹⁷ was concerned with it. We learn from Durandus de S. Porciano how such a commission of theologians could have been composed. He had been appointed *magister sacri Palatii* in 1313 notwithstanding his controversies with Thomists, but already in 1317 he had become bishop, first of Limoux,

⁴¹¹ "Supplico ergo sanctitati vestre quod primus et secundus remittantur ad suos superiores secundum exigenciam suorum excessuum corrigendi et quod eidem sanctitati vestre placeat quod subito arrestentur." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 56, 556.137–39.

⁴¹² "Et unum fratrem dicti ordinis Predicatorum, nuntium archiepiscopi Coloniensis, ad persequendum dictum crimen heresis contra predictos fratres Aycardum et Nicolaum" *Appellatio maior* (Sept. 18, 1328): yet the Pope, knowing Nicolas to be sentenced for favoring heresy, still let him be his *vicarius* and *diffinitor* of the general chapter. *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 64: 595, see lines 13–23.

⁴¹³ Conradus Eubel, *Hierarchia Catholica Medii Aevi: sive summorum Pontificum, S.R.E. Cardinalium, Ecclesiarum antistitum series ab anno 1198 usque ad annum 1431 perducta*, vol. 1 (Monasterii: 1913), 14–16.

⁴¹⁴ Eubel (note 413), 1, 14, note 22; see above note 43. Before being created cardinal, Guillelmus had been *Magister sacri Palatii* 1306–12.

⁴¹⁵ Eubel (note 413), 1, 14, no. 23; Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 330, 2, 137–40; Johannes Schlageter, *LThK*3, 10 (2001), 825 sq.; M.J. Grajevskij in *NCE*2, 14, 567b sq. Meister Eckhart may have known him when he was a *Sententiarius* in Paris, Vitalis was a student of the Franciscan *magister* Jacobus de Carceto 1288–92.

⁴¹⁶ Eubel (note 413), 1, 15, no. 11; Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 349, 2, 239–42; J. Goyens in *DHGE* (note 147) 8 (1935), 1084; Johannes Schlageter in *LThK*3 (note 148), 2 (1994), 296.

⁴¹⁷ Agostino Borromeo in *The Papacy: An Encyclopedia*, vol. 2 (New York: 2002), 980b sq.

then of Le Puy, and finally of Meaux in 1326, during which time he composed the third redaction of his commentary on the *Sentences*.⁴¹⁸ In the same year Durandus was present at the curia in Avignon for some time, where he participated in censuring 51 *articuli* from the works of William Ockham.⁴¹⁹ In that case three bishops had been appointed.

It is unlikely that the commission for the examination of Meister Eckhart's works included Raimundus Beguini OP, who had become Latin patriarch of Jerusalem in 1324 and died in Cyprus in 1328,⁴²⁰ or Johannes Dominici de Montepessulano OP, who was at the papal curia from 1324 to 1327 tasked with compiling an index of St Thomas Aquinas' *Summa theologiae*, and from 1331 to 1335 as *Poenitentiarius minor*.⁴²¹ Quite probably the members would have been Jacobus de Concosio OP, who had been the confessor of the pope and was named archbishop of Aix en Provence, but remained often at the papal curia at Avignon where he died on 1 May 1329,⁴²² and Raimundus Stephani, who had become archbishop of Corinth in 1322, but mostly dwelt at the papal curia, where he still lived in 1332.⁴²³ Furthermore, whether Armandus de Belloviso OP, promoted *magister* on order of Pope John XXII in 1326 and nominated *magister sacri Palatii* in 1328⁴²⁴ was implicated in formulating the final censure still remains unknown. We must admit that we do not know who the members of that commission were.

The commissioned theologians evaluated the lists of the Cologne process and Eckhart's written defense. They reduced the lists to 28 propositions and, after interrogating the Meister about them, wrote the *Votum Avenionense* considering them all as "heretical as the words sound."⁴²⁵ From this evaluation we have a manuscript copy that contains the incriminating *articuli*, the critique by the commission, and a summary of Meister Eckhart's defense as well as of the response of the commission on it to

⁴¹⁸ *SOP* (note 40), 1, 339–50, see no. 927, 340–43.

⁴¹⁹ *SOP* (note 40), 1, 345 sq.; see Joseph Koch: "Neue Aktenstücke zu dem gegen Wilhelm von Ockham in Avignon geführten Prozeß," in *Kleine Schriften* (note 11) 2, 275–365, see 286.

⁴²⁰ *SOP* (note 40), 3, 278 sq.; Eubel (note 413), 1, 286.

⁴²¹ *SOP* (note 40), 2, 413 sq.

⁴²² *SOP* (note 40), 2, 319; Eubel (note 413), 1, 96.

⁴²³ *SOP* (note 40), 3, 287 sq.

⁴²⁴ See *SOP* (note 40), 1, 120–25.

⁴²⁵ "est dictus articulus haereticus, ut sonat." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 59, 569.5; until "Hos duos <27 & 28> articulos, prout eorum verba sonant, haereticos reputamus." See 589.9; these are the stereotypical formulations of disapproval.

each proposition.⁴²⁶ The whole gives the impression that the commission was only interested in the literal reading of the propositions (“*ut verba sonant*”), whether orthodox or heterodox, and did not accept Eckhart’s attempts to explain their context.⁴²⁷

The Cistercian *magister theologiae* and Abbot Jacobus Novelli (Fournier), elevated cardinal by Pope John XXII on 18 December 1327,⁴²⁸ gave a separate expert’s report, of which the only remaining fragments are preserved in two works by the Augustinian Johannes Hiltalingen of Basel.⁴²⁹ As Sturlese shows, a synoptic presentation of those fragments with the pertinent parts of the *Votum Avenonense* reveals that they must have been written with knowledge of the latter text. The judgement of Jacobus, the later Pope Benedict XII, is no less negative than that by the commission of theologians. A collection of critical appraisals concerning Meister Eckhart, William Ockham, Petrus Johannis Olivi, and others, possibly material from the trial processes, was stored in the library of Pope Benedict XII. It had been borrowed by William Cordona, a scribe of the papal curia, but later no trace of it has been found.⁴³⁰ The proper court was the *consistorium* of the pope where he deliberated with the cardinals.⁴³¹ The expert’s reports of the theological commission and Cardinal Jacobus Novelli served as a preparation for this. But before Pope John XXII and his highest counselors had come to a deliberation, Meister Eckhart had died.

⁴²⁶ Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod. Vat. lat. 3899, fol. 124r–130r—inaccessible during the time of elaboration because of the three-year closure of the library. Printed ed. Friedrich Pelster, “Ein Gutachten aus dem Eckehart-Prozeß in Avignon,” *Aus der Geisteswelt des Mittelalters* (Festschrift Martin Grabmann), ed. Albert Lang Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters Suppl. 3, 2 (Münster: 1935), 1099–1124; *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 59, 568–90. The *articuli* of the *Votum Avenonense* are indicated in the table on *In agro dominico* below by their numbers in the column “Votum Aven.”

⁴²⁷ Trusen (note 12), 118 sq. A theological evaluation cannot be given here for the reasons explained earlier in the chapter.

⁴²⁸ Eubel (note 413), 1, 16, no. 19; Glorieux, *Répertoire* (note 40), no. 370, 2, 265 sq.

⁴²⁹ Johannes Hiltalingen de Basilea, *De decem responsionibus* and *Scriptum super quatuor libros Sententiarum*. The fragments have been edited by Karl-Heinz Witte, “Die Rezeption der Lehre Meister Eckharts durch Johannes Hiltalingen von Basel: Untersuchungen und Textausgabe,” *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales* 71 (2004), 305–71; *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 58, 560–67. The fragments are indicated in the table on *In agro dominico* below by the page numbers of *Acta Echardiana* in the column “Jacob Fourn.”

⁴³⁰ Marie-Henriette Julien de Pommerol, *La bibliothèque pontificale à Avignon et à Peñíscola pendant le grand schisme d’occident et sa dispersion*, vol. 1 (Rome: 1991), 386, no. 93.

⁴³¹ The formulation in *In agro dominico* hints at this: “Verum nos omnes suprascriptos articulos per multos sacre theologie doctores examinari fecimus, et nos ipsi cum fratribus nostris illos <articulos> examinavimus diligenter.” *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 65, 599.95 sq.; Trusen, *Prozeß* (note 12), 117.

For a long time the date of Eckhart's death had been forgotten. Daniel Sudermann even thought he would have been executed at Heidelberg in 1300.⁴³² Accidentally, I found out that Meister Eckhart died on 28 January 1328, presumably at Avignon.⁴³³ On this day his commemoration was held in German Dominican priories of the brothers and sisters still at the end of 17th century. The Dominican Friedrich Steill composed a book destined for reading during community meals especially in convents of sisters, where he gave a popular history of the order in short sections and, for each day of the year, the proper commemorations, indicating the place or at least the country of the commemoration if from foreign parts. There he has:

The twenty-eighth day in January . . . in Germany blessed commemoration of Father Eckhard, a highly illuminated teacher and doctor of Sacred Scripture, on whom Father Georgius Eppius, dist. I, says that he was <follows quote in Latin left out here> that he was of a most pure life, an upright teacher of the Christian church—as like himself there was <no other> in his time etc. <He> has left many profound and very precious books [follows a list as with Johannes Trithemius] . . . Finally passed away blessedly in the Lord and after his death he appeared to blessed Henry Suso all glorious and said <to him>: 'Henry, I live in the face of the most holy Trinity in eternity'.⁴³⁴

⁴³² His note in the manuscript Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. Germ. 2° 79, fol. 1v margin, according to Marquard von Lindau, *Deutsche Predigten: Untersuchungen und Edition*, ed. Rüdiger Blumrich (Tübingen: 1994), 16 sq.

⁴³³ Senner: "Meister Eckhart in Köln" (note 207), 232–34.

⁴³⁴ "Der Acht und Zwanzigste Tag im Jenner . . . Item in Teutschland Seelige Gedächtnuß P. Eckhardi eines hocherleuchten Lehrers und Doctors der H<eiligen> Schrift, von welchem P. Georgius Eppius, dist. I, sagt: Daß er gewesen 'vita purissimus, expeditus Doctor Ecclesiae, suo tempore incomparabilis, eruditione fidei, conversatione et moribus insignis'. Eines reinesten lebens, ein wackerer Lehrer der Christlichen Kirchen—ja der seiner Zeit seines gleichen nit gehabt etc. Hat viele Sin<n>reiche und hochwehrte Bücher hinterlassen als nemlich: Ein Außlegung über den Genesin. Ein Buch über den Exodum. Eine Außlegung über das Hohe Lied Salomonis. Ein Sonntäglich Predig-Buch. Ein Feyertäglich Predig-Buch. Ein Buch oder Außlegung des H<eiligen> Vatter unsers. Ein Buch über das Buch der Weißheit. Ein Außlegung über das Evangelium Johannis. Ein Außlegung über die vier Bücher der Sententzen. Und viele andere. Ist endlich Gottseelig im Herrn entschlaffen und dem Seeligen Henrico Susoni nach seinem Todt gantz glorwürdig erschienen und gesagt: 'F<rater> Henrice, ego in conspectu sanctae Trinitatis, aeternaliter vivo'. Henrice, ich lebe in dem Angesicht der allerheyligsten Dreyfaltigkeit ewiglich. Von ihm sagt Trithemius, daß er sey gewesen 'Vir in divinis scripturis eruditus, et in Philosophia Aristotelica, omnium suo tempore doctissimus. Claruit in Austria, ubi docendo et praedicando famosissimus est habitus'. Ein Mann in heyligen Schrifften wohl erfahren, in der Philosophy unvergleichlich, in Lehr und Predigen in Oesterreich Landkundig. Ex Eppio dist. I; Ant<onio> Sen<ensi> Bibl<iotheca>, Trith<emius> etc." Fridericus Steill: *Ephemerides Dominicanae sacrae: das ist Heiligkeit und Tugendvoller Geruch der auß allen Enden der Welt zusammen getragenen Ehren-Blumen deß Himmlisch-fruchtbaren Lust-Gartens Prediger Ordens*, vol. 1 (Dillingen:

Whereas Steill has collected most of his information from the sources which he indicates and has completely depended on Johannes Trithemius concerning the bibliographical data, the story of Eckhart's apparition to Henry Suso is taken from his *Vita* although with a characteristic remodeling⁴³⁵ and the location of the commemoration is from another unnamed source—evidently from German regional Dominican tradition in which Meister Eckhart was, at that time, still memorialized as a learned and saintly man.

According to a general rule of Roman law a process is finished with the death of the accused.⁴³⁶ This had been the case with John of Paris (Quidort) who had been forbidden to continue his lectures as *magister theologiae* at the University of Paris because of his doctrine on the Eucharist in 1306. During the same year he appealed to the pope and died awaiting a definitive sentence.⁴³⁷ But on the news of Meister Eckhart's death the archbishop of Cologne urged the pope not to close the process without final judgement. Although the original letter by Henry of Virneburg is not preserved we learn about this from John XXII's answer of 30 April 1328. The pope writes to the archbishop that the process against the late Eckhart will be continued and would soon be finished.⁴³⁸ It is quite probable that Cardinal Jacobus Novelli's expert report was if not begun, so at least

1691), 179a–b. Orthography of the original, the list of Eckhart's works, and the last quote are from Johannes Trithemius, *Catalogus illustrium virorum Germaniae*, in Trithemius, *Opera historica*, vol. 1 (Francoforti: 1601), 143. Also quoted in Georg Epp, *De illustribus viris ac sanctimonialibus Ordinis Praedicatorum* (Basileae: 1506), fol. 9v—where however we only find: "Eckhardus Theutonicus, magister in theologia, homo doctus et sanctus, obiit anno domini MCCCXXVII"; Antonius Senensis: *Bibliotheca Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum: viro- rum inter illos doctrina insignium nomina et eorum quae scripto mandarunt opusculorum, titula et argumenta complectens* (Parisiis: 1585). Steill evidently did not realize that in vol. 1, 2 (1691), 140b of his cited work in the section "Geschichte vom H<eiligen> Orden" in the year 1327 he gave another account of Meister Eckhart from the same sources, adding from the Dominican nuns' Adelhausen Chronicle: "Ein andächtiger gelährter Meister der H<eiligen> Schrift und eine Zierde deß Prediger-Ordens in Teutschland seiner Lehre und seines Lebens halber, starb im Jahr 1327."

⁴³⁵ See *Vita*, ch. 6, in Heinrich Seuse, *Deutsche Schriften*, ed. Karl Bihlmeyer (Stuttgart: 1907), 22.27–23.12; Steill's rendering is shortened to give the essential message: Meister Eckhart is blessed in heaven.

⁴³⁶ "Is, qui in reatu decedit, integri statu decedit: extinguitur enim crimen mortalitate." *Digestae* (note 345), l. 48.4.11: Ulpianus libro octavo disputationum: 1419b; see Liebs (note 345), 68, no. E 74.

⁴³⁷ *SOP* (note 40), 2, 517.

⁴³⁸ Archivio Segreto Vaticano, *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 62, 593 sq.

finished and submitted after the death of the Meister and the demand of the archbishop to continue the process.⁴³⁹

On 27 March 1329, Pope John XXII published the bull *In agro dominico* containing his final judgement.⁴⁴⁰ It is, as Trusen remarked,⁴⁴¹ mitigated compared with the previous reports, censuring 15 propositions from works of Eckhart as heretical “as the words sound,” two others as heretical but not authenticated, and finally declaring 11 more authentic *articuli* as liable to be misunderstood. Loris Sturlese in his critical edition has given some hints about the textual history of this document preserved as an archival copy at the Vatican archives and quoted—not completely faithfully—by later annalists.⁴⁴²

The introductory words, the so-called *arenga*, sound very harsh. Trusen underlines that they were not legally effective.⁴⁴³ Kurt Ruh in the second edition of his book *Meister Eckhart*, also sees them as harsh, accepting Trusen’s juridical point of view. Nevertheless, he sees the matter as “downright perfidy . . . what became historically efficient was only the degradation of Eckhart as teaching wrongly.”⁴⁴⁴ Flasch takes the same view taking the word “devil’s seed” as “the last word of the pope” and a

⁴³⁹ *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 58, 560–67; see further above. Sturlese dates Jacobus’s report “between mid 1327 and April 30, 1328 at Avignon,” see 560, but gives no reason for the *terminus ante quem*. As Jacobus Fournier was created cardinal on 18 December 1327, it is merely probable that he was asked to deliver a separate report after this date. The manuscript was in the Papal library at Peñiscola before 1384, but borrowed by Guillelmus Cardona its trace is lost. Marie-Henriette Jullien de Pommerol & Jacques Monfrin: *La bibliothèque pontificale à Avignon et à Peñiscola, pendant le grand schisme d’Occident et sa dispersion: inventaires et concordances*, Rome 1991, 386, n° 93.

⁴⁴⁰ Archivio segreto Vaticano: A.A., arm. I–XVIII, no. 3226; first ed. Heinrich S. Denifle: “Acten zum Prozesse Meister Eckeharts” in: *Archiv für Litteratur- und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters* 2 (1886), 636–40; critical ed. by Loris Sturlese implying secondary copies: *Acta Echardiana* (note 2) no. 65: 596–600.

⁴⁴¹ Trusen: *Prozeß* (note 12), p. 120.

⁴⁴² *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 66, 596 + 601. Particularly aggravated: “Emersit e Praedicatorum . . . familia blasphemus Echardus, vir apud eos sacrae paginae doctoratus laurea donatus, qui cum errores foedissimos disseminaret, primum a Coloniensi archiepiscopo im ipsum fidei quaestio habita est. . . .” Odericus Raynaldus, *Annales ecclesiastici ab anno quo desinit Card. Caesarius Baronius MCXCVIII usque ad annum MCCCXXXV* (Coloniae: 1691), 389 sq. (ed. used by Sturlese, inaccessible for me during the closure of the Vatican library), *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 66, 601.

⁴⁴³ Trusen, *Prozeß* (note 12), 123 sq.

⁴⁴⁴ Ruh, *Meister Eckhart* (note 28), 184 sq. The German expression “Irrlehrer” is not rendered here as “heretic” because it does not necessarily contain pertinacity.

main characteristic of the *bullā*.⁴⁴⁵ The very words “On the field of the Lord . . . an enemy sewed weeds over the seed of truth” were a formula of customary use in the Avignon papal chancellery.⁴⁴⁶ We cannot here trace the impact of the *narratio* on later times, but it has to be observed that the *bullā*—neither the *arenga* nor the censure or the concluding part—does not contain a condemnation of Meister Eckhart as heretic. Consequently, a commission to inquire for the possibility of a rehabilitation of the Meister, which had been constituted by the Dominican master general as demanded by the general chapter of 1980,⁴⁴⁷ arrived at the conclusion that it is not necessary.⁴⁴⁸ However, as a consequence of the censure, the works by Meister Eckhart “containing the aforesaid articles or something of them” were condemned and forbidden,⁴⁴⁹ but the pope did not order their burning. At the end of *In agro dominico* we find the

⁴⁴⁵ Flasch, *Meister Eckhart* (note 38), 317. This is not contained *verbatim*, but it may be interpreted from the quote of Matt. 13:28 “inimicus homo supra semen veritatis zizania seminet,” *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 65: 597.4, what has been commonly understood as work of the devil; see Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor evangelia*, 1 *In Matthaeum* . . . , ed. Angelicus Guarienti (Taurini: 1953), 215b–218a; Aquino, *Super evangelium S. Matthaei lectura*, ed. Raphael Cai (Taurini: 1951), 178a, no. 1139 sq. It was applied to Eckhart “homo iste seductus <a patre mendacii> contra lucidissimam veritatem fidei in agro ecclesie spinas et tribulos germinans . . .” *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 65: 597.13 sq.

⁴⁴⁶ Trusen, *Prozeß* (note 12), 123 sq.; see Hermann Hold, *Unglaublich glaubhaft: die Arengen-Rethorik des Avignoneser Papsttums*, vol. 1 (Bern: 2004), on the *topos* of *ager Domini*, see 32 sq. Botanically *Lolium temulentum* (darnel) is a poisonous weed in cornfields which causes dizziness and a feeling of drunkenness. “Ne in agro Dominico, sacra videlicet monachorum religione, indecorum aliquid obrepit aut vitiosum quicquam pernicio in segetem calescat . . .” (cf. Eccl. 24:23) was a formulation of the Council of Vienne 1311–12: *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum decreta*, vol. 3, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo (Rome: 1973), 370.20–23. The following passage links on “nonnulli inquieti spiritus, dum plus exquirunt contemplando, quam capiunt, usque ad peruersa dogmata erumpunt, et dum veritatis discipuli esse humiliter neglegunt, magistri errorum fiunt.” Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia in Iob*, I, 6, c. 37, vol. 1 ed. Marc Adriaen, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* 143 (Turnhout: 1979), 327.68–71; see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 2a2ae a. 185, a. 5, co.

⁴⁴⁷ *Acta Capituli generalis provincialium Ordinis Praedicatorum . . . 1980 . . . celebrati* (Rome: 1980), no. 122, 74.

⁴⁴⁸ The studies of the commission are published in: *Eckhardus Theutonicus homo doctus et sanctus* (note 255). Despite the appearance of this study, the erroneous opinion that Eckhart was personally condemned as a heretic can be found in contemporary scholarship, for example in John Marenbon, “Bonaventure, the German Dominicans and the new translations” in *Routledge History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, *Medieval philosophy*, ed. John Marenbon (London: 1998), 225–40, see 234.

⁴⁴⁹ “ac nichilominus libros quoslibet seu opuscula eisdem Ekardi, prefatos articulos seu eorum aliquem continentes, dampnamus et reprobamus expresse.” *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 65, 600.108–10.

communication that Eckhart at the end of his life had confessed his Catholic faith and renounced not only what would be found erroneous and heretical in his works, but even "what could generate in the minds of the faithful a heretical, erroneous sense."⁴⁵⁰ Both Ruh and Trusen were convinced that the *bullā* refers to a new renunciation which the Meister would have delivered in Avignon: "in its complete, delimiting with highest diligence, and unconditional form, it differs essentially from the renunciation in the Cologne Dominican church."⁴⁵¹ But at close inspection and comparison of the two texts this does not appear to be certain. A new element in the *bullā* is that Eckhart admits 26 of the 28 *articuli* as extracts from his own works. This has been a result of the discussion with the commissioned theologians. That he submits everything he has written and said to the judgement of the apostolic see is already present in the oath of purification, as well as "what may have a less sound understanding."⁴⁵² A characteristic restriction we find back in the Avignon document "as far as this <wrong> sense is concerned" ("quantum ad illum sensum") is that the Meister felt misunderstood. Since the process had not come to an end when Eckhart died there was no cogent necessity for him to renounce anew and this time specifically the not yet sentenced *articuli*. This does not mean of course that such a renunciation at an intermediate state of the process or even at his deathbed could be positively excluded.

⁴⁵⁰ "Prefatus Ekardus in fine vite sue catholicam fidem profitens predictos viginti sex articulos, quos se predicasse confessus extitit, necnon quecunque alia per eum scripta et docta, sive in scolis sive in predicationibus, que possent generare in mentibus fidelium sensum hereticum vel erroneum ac vere fidei inimicum, quantum ad illum sensum revocavit ac etiam reprobavit et haberi voluit pro simpliciter et totaliter revocatis, ac si illos et illa singillatim et singulariter revocasset, determinationi apostolice sedis et nostre tam se quam scripta sua et dicta omnia summittendo." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 65, 600.118–125; see Trusen (note 12), 123.

⁴⁵¹ Ruh, *Meister Eckhart* (note 28), 186; Trusen (note 12), 120.

⁴⁵² "corrigam et revocabo in genere et in specie, quandocumque et quotiescumque id fuerit opportunum, quemcumque reperiri potuerunt habere intellectum minus sanum." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 54, 549.38–40.

*Tabular overview of the articuli of In agro Dominico*⁴⁵³Table 1. Censured as “containing the error or stain of heresy.” Jacob. Fourn. = p. in *Acta Echardiana*

No.	Source	Works vol., p., line	1st list	2nd list	Eckhart's <i>Responsio</i> ⁴⁵⁴	3rd (4th) list	Votum Aven.	Jacob. Fourn.
1	<i>In Gen. I^m</i> n. 7	LW I/1, 190, 5–9 LW I/2, 65, 12–15	43	–	Ad 8 LW V, 290, 6–11: n. 120	–	1	–
2	<i>In Ioh.</i> N. 216	LW III, 181, 7	–	–	–	3	2	561
3	<i>In Gen. I^m</i> n. 7	LW I/1, 190, 11 LW I/2, 65, 17	44	–	Ad 9 LW V, 290, 12–291, 9: n. 120 <121?>	–	3	–
4	<i>In Ioh.</i> n. 494	LW III, 426, 4–5	–	–	–	3	7	–
5	<i>In Ioh.</i> n. 494	LW III, 426, 7–9	–	–	–	3	8	–
6	<i>In Ioh.</i> n. 494	LW III, 426, 9–10	–	–	–	3	9	–
7	<i>In Ioh.</i> n. 611	LW III, 534, 2–4	–	–	–	3	14	–
8	Sermon 6	DW I, 100, 4–6	–	89	35. LW V, 339, 17–21.	–	15	–
9	Sermon 6	DW I, 112, 6–9	64	100	Ad 10 LW V, 301, 8–12: n. 144. 40. LW V, 342, 6–9	–	16	–
10	Sermon 6	DW I, 110, 8–112,7	54	98	Ult. LW V, 296, 10–19: n. 132 39 LW V, 341, 11–23.	–	20	564
11	Sermon 5a	DW I, 77, 1–17 (?)	60 61	–	A ad 6. LW V, 298, 12–299, 4: n. 137.	–	21	564 565
12	Sermon 24	DW I, 421–422, 1	–	–	–	4?	22	565
13	Sermon ?	? <i>Item predicauit</i>	–	–	–	4?	23	566 567
14	<i>Liber Benedictus</i>	DW V, 22, 5–10	12	–	Ad 12. LW V, 285, 1–3: n. 100	–	27	–
15	Sermon ?	? <i>Predicauit</i>	–	–	–	4?	28	–

⁴⁵³ “errorem seu labem heresis continere.” *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 65, 599.98–100.⁴⁵⁴ The sometimes confusing (marginal) numbers in *Acta Echardiana* are due to the references in the earlier volumes of Meister Eckhart: *Deutsche und Lateinische Werke*,

Table 2. Classified as "to sound too evil and being much suspect of heresy, even if with many expositions and supplementations the <articles> may get or have a Catholic sense."⁴⁵⁵

No.	Source	Works vol., p., line	1st list	2nd list	Eckhart's Responsio	3rd 4th	Votum Aven.	Jacob. Fourn.
16	<i>In Gen. I^m</i> n. 165	LW I/1, 634, 22–23	–	–	–	4?	10	
17	<i>In Gen. I^m</i> n. 165	LW I/1, 635, 3–5	48	–	Ad 12. LW V, 292, 8–293, 9; n. 124ff.	–	11	
18	<i>In Ioh.</i> n. 656	LW III, 561, 9–10	–	–	–	3	12	
19	<i>In Sap.</i> n. 226	LW II, 561, 1	–	–	–	4?	13	
20	Sermon ?	? <i>Item predicauit</i>	–	–	–	4?	17	563
21	Sermon 14	DW I, 239, 4	55	87	Ad 2. LW V, 297, 1–9; n. 133 34. LW V, 339, 8–16.	–	18	563
22	Sermon 6	DW I, 109, 7–8+110, 1	53	98	Infra. LW V, 296, 1–9; n. 131 39. LW V, 341, 11–23.	–	19	563 564
23	<i>In Exod.</i> N. 58+60	LW II, 65, 2–6+66, 6	46	–	Ad 10 LW V, 291, 10–12; n. 122.	–	24	567
24	Sermon "Vom edlen Menschen"	DW V, 114, 21–115, 3	23	–	Ad 15 LW V, 286, 1–7; n. 103.	–	25	567
25	<i>In Ioh.</i> n. 728	LW III, 636, 8–11	–	–	–	3	26	567
26	Sermon 4	DW I, 69, 8–9	73	106	Ad 15 LW V, 304, 4–10; n. 150. 43. LW V, 343, 25–344, 15.	–	6	

where a provisional edition of the "Rechtfertigungsschrift," organized according to the interpretation of Théry, had been used (*Acta Echardiana*, note 2, p. 256). Therefore I give here, when applying the numbering, as in the "Rechtfertigungsschrift," page and lines of *Acta Echardiana* and the marginal numbers there.

⁴⁵⁵ "nimis male sonare et multum esse temerarios de heresique suspectos, licet cum multis expositionibus et suppletionibus sensum catholicum formare valeant vel habere." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 65: 599.100–600.102.

Table 3. Of uncertain authenticity, censured as "containing the error or stain of heresy."⁴⁵⁶

No.	Source	Works vol., p., l.	1st list	2nd list	Eckhart's Responsio	3rd 4th	Votum Aven.	Jacob. Fourn.
27	<i>Sermon 13</i>	Cf. DW I, 220, 4-5	59	7	Ad 6. LWV, 298, 12-299, 4: n. 137. 3. LW V, 320, 5-9.	—	4	
28	<i>Sermon 9</i>	Cf. DW I, 148, 5-7	—	127	54. LW V, 348, 21-24.	—	5	562

On 15 April 1329, Pope John XXII finally sent a letter to the archbishop of Cologne in which the text of *In agro dominico* was inserted and with the order to publish it in his archdiocese and ecclesiastical province.⁴⁵⁷ Here explicit reference was made to the pastoral importance "that by such publication the hearts of the simple <people> which are easily seduced and, in first place those to whom that Eckhart, when he lived. had preached the aforesaid articles, may not be filled with the errors contained in them."⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁶ "errorem seu labem heresis continere." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 65, 599.98-100.

⁴⁵⁷ Archivio segreto Vaticano, *Registrum Vaticanum* 89, ep. 5: fol. 2r-3v; *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 66, 601-05.

⁴⁵⁸ "ut per publicationem huiusmodi simplicium corda, qui faciliter seducuntur, et maxime illi quibus idem Ekardus, dum vixit, predictos articulos predicavit, erroribus contentis in eis minime imbuantur." *Acta Echardiana* (note 2), no. 66, 602.15-18.

ECKHART'S LATIN WORKS

Alessandra Beccarisi

THE COMPLETE CATALOGUE OF ECKHART'S EXTANT LATIN WORKS

1. Prologues to the "Opus Tripartitum"—LW I, 148–84 (LW I/2, 1–59).
2. Commentary on the Book of Genesis—LW I, 185–444 (LW I/2, 20–329).
3. Commentary on the Parables Contained in the Book of Genesis—LW I, 445–702. (331–451).
4. Commentary on the Book of Exodus—LW II, 1–227.
5. Sermons and Lessons on Ecclesiasticus Chapter 24—LW II, 229–300.
6. Commentary on the Book of Wisdom—LW II, 301–634.
7. Commentary on the Canticle, fragment—LW II, 635–39.
8. Commentary on the Gospel of St John—LW III, 1–708.
9. Sermons—LW IV, 1–468.
10. Introduction to the Sentences of Peter Lombard—LW V, 1–26.
11. Questions (discussed in Paris, 1303–04)—LW V, 27–71.
 - 11.1 Utrum in deo sit idem esse et intelligere.
 - 11.2 Utrum intelligere angeli, ut dicit actionem, sit suum esse.
 - 11.3 Utrum laus dei in patria sit nobilior eius dilectione in via, fragm.
12. Questions (discussed in Paris, 1311–13)—LW V, 72–83.
 - 12.1 Utrum aliquem motum esse sine termino implicet contradictionem.
 - 12.2 Utrum in corpore Christi morientis in cruce remanserint formae elementorum.
 - 12.3 [Newly rediscovered Questions: Utrum omnipotentia quae est in deo debeat attendi secundum potentiam absolutam vel secundum potentiam ordinatam; Utrum essentia dei esset actualior quam proprietas; Utrum diversitas esset relatio realis vel rationis; Utrum differentia secundum rationem sit prior quam differentia secundum rem (Vat. Lat. 1086, fol. 222v–2224r): Quaestiones Parisiensis: Supplementum, 6–9, LW 1/2, 453–469.]
13. Sermon for the Celebration of St Augustine—LW V, 85–99.
14. Commentary on the Pater Noster—LW V, 101–29 [In light of recent research, this could be placed at the opening of LW III as it is not an "academic work"]. Composition date unknown.

15. Sermon for the Celebration of Easter (held in Paris, Easter 1294)—LW V, 131–48.
16. Memorandum of Defense (Cologne, September 1326)—LW V, 247–354.

The works of Meister Eckhart¹ can be divided into two groups: (1) The academic works and related works of piety, connected to his work as lecturer and *magister* in Paris, which include the *Collatio in libros sententiarum*, five *Quaestiones*, a sermon, and a commentary on the *Pater Noster* (the Lord's Prayer). These works are of certain date, but the level of certainty is in some cases circumstantial. (2) Works written at different moments of the Dominican's life, often corrected and revised, which are part of a general project called by the author the *Opus tripartitum* (i.e. work in three parts). Of this project, there remain today only the *Prologues*, the two commentaries on Genesis, the commentaries on Exodus, on Ecclesiasticus, on Wisdom, on the Gospel of St John, as well as a collection of Latin sermons. The dates of these works are rather controversial and can often be established only on the basis of thorough codicological and palaeographic analysis. In the presentation of Eckhart's works, I shall first examine the academic works and then those written within the context of the *Opus tripartitum*.

COLLATIO IN LIBROS SENTENTIARUM²

Though Eckhart's commentary on the *Sentences* has not, as yet, been found, we are in possession of his *Principium*, that is to say, the inaugural lesson which the Parisian bachelors of theology had to give between the exaltation of the cross (14 September) and St Dionysius Day (9 October). He also wrote a *Collatio* which has survived in two manuscripts. Given that he was confirmed as *lector sententiarum* on 18 April 1294, it is reason-

¹ I will cite Eckhart's works according to their critical editions: Meister Eckhart, *Die deutschen und die lateinischen Werke*, hrsg. im Auftrage der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft. *Die deutschen Werke*, edited by J. Quint and G. Steer, 5 vols (Stuttgart: 1936) [= DW]; *Die lateinischen Werke*, edited by E. Benz, C. Christ, B. Decker, H. Fischer, B. Geyer, J. Koch, E. Seeberg, L. Sturlese, K. Weiß, and A. Zimmermann, 5 vols (Stuttgart: 1936–2007) [= LW]. The new edition of *Prologi, Expositio super Genesim* and *Liber parabolarum Genesis*, edited by L. Sturlese (Stuttgart: 1985), is quoted as LW I/2.

² Eckhart, *Collatio in libros sententiarum*, LW V, 1–26.

able to suppose that he gave his inaugural lecture a year earlier, in 1293, between 14 September and 4 October.

Though the literary genre of the *Collationes* does not offer much room for originality, Eckhart's *Collatio* is of some interest for it shows the idea the young Eckhart had of the structure and the content of the *Sentences*, and it presents a certain number of characteristic Eckhartian features of thought and style. As in Richard Rufus of Cornwall whose *Collatio* Eckhart follows literally in its themes, structure, and general lines, Eckhart's inaugural lecture comments on the verse of Siracides (Ecclesiasticus) 38:4: *Altissimus creavit de terra medicinam* [The Lord has created medicines from the earth]. Each word in this verse refers to a book of the *Sentences*: "Altissimus" refers to the first book, where God is considered from two aspects: in himself and with respect to the created beings. In accordance with this, there is a division into two books which corresponds, for the first book (dist. 1–35), to the theology of personal and essential property, and for the second part, to God as principle of power, knowledge, and will. The word "creavit" corresponds to the second book devoted to creation and the created. The expression "de terra" indicates the humanity of the Savior (book 2, dist. 1–23), considered from the point of view of humility. Finally, "medicinam" refers to book four. Dealing with the grace of justification, glory, and resurrection, it is subdivided into two parts: theology of the sacraments (book 4, dist. 1–43), followed by the theology of glory.

Eckhart's analysis of the general contents of the four books of the *Sentences* is not particularly original, especially in comparison with the *Collatio* of Richard of Cornwell. However, though as a whole it is a work that follows tradition, Eckhart's *Collatio* presents some new and interesting elements of style and content which are subsequently found in all of his future works.³

In commenting on the word "Altissimus", Eckhart quotes, as does Richard, the first verse of Siracides (Ecclesiasticus): *Altitudinem caeli qui dimensus est?* [Who can measure the height of the Heavens?]. Then: *Unus est altissimus, creator omnium omnipotens* [The one is the highest, the omnipotent creator of all things]. Eckhart interprets *Altitudinem caeli* in order to demonstrate that the cosmos, though immense, is nevertheless measurable, as the calculations of the astronomer Alfraganus and the Jewish doctor Moses Maimonides demonstrate. He thus contrasts the exactness

³ The matter of the "originality" of Eckhart's *Collatio* in respect of the *Collatio* of Richard Rufus of Cornwall is in need of further research and discussion. [Editor]

and measurability of the cosmos with the indeterminate and incommensurable nature of God. Thus, already in this first work, the contrast arises between finite and infinite, between the quiddity of created beings and the simple being of God. For, though no one can measure the breadth of the sky, it is nevertheless determinate and measurable. The one, according to Eckhart, refers to the simplicity of God, which is contrasted with the created or formally inherent being (“*esse hoc et hoc*”). Here, for the first time, appears a famous Eckhartian claim which distinguishes the created as “*esse hoc et hoc*” from God, who is “*ipsum esse*”.

SERMO PASCHALIS

This vision of theology is confirmed in the first Eckhartian sermon, commonly called *Sermo Paschalis*.⁴ On 18 April 1294, on Easter day, Eckhart was in Paris as *lector sententiarum*, that is to say, as bachelor of theology, with the task of commenting on the four books of the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard. On this day he is supposed to have given the celebrative sermon. The sermon *Pascha nostrum immolates est Christus. Itaque epul-
emur* (2 Cor. 5:7–8) belongs to the so-called genre of academic sermons, and displays indeed the characteristic structure of solemn sermons, constituted by the protheme, a prayer, and the theme. The text also manifests some more personal features: an abundant use of erudite sources, a predilection for the sayings of the philosophers, a taste for new and rare subjects, the correspondence between the Christian virtue of humility and the *contemptus mundi* of the philosophers, and the theological and philosophical explanation of the relation between humility and grace. The liturgical occasion, namely the Easter celebrations, gives the Dominican the possibility of interpreting the Eucharist both as a coincidence, in the divine, of the maximum and the minimum, and as the sacrament of the humble man.

The rigorously theological theme—Christ’s salvation through the passion—is presented on the basis of a wide use of “philosophical” authorities, such as the philosophers Avicenna, Ptolemy, and Hermes Trismegistus. It is the announcement of a philosophy of religion which, in the prologue of the later *Commentary on the Gospel of St John*, shall become a whole program of explaining the Holy Scriptures by means of

⁴ Eckhart, *Sermo Paschalis*, LW V, 131–48.

the natural reasons of the philosophers. The Eckhartian program, however, contradicts the very principles of the teaching of Albert and Thomas, who had set up a clear-cut differentiation of method and subject, between philosophy and theology. Eckhart, however, is convinced that a philosophy of religion is possible because religion is but one of the ways in which wisdom became manifest.

The subject theme of the sermon, supremely theological, also enables Eckhart to present his personal vision of the most excellent quality of a good Christian, namely, humility. On the authority of Augustine, Eckhart contrasts the ideal of the wise Aristotelian who by means of knowledge or reason alone achieves his own perfection and, thus, his own happiness, with the model of the humble man, conscious of himself and of his own limits (*Ergo agnitio sui ipsius et infirmitatis propriae est quod praemittitur ad parandum*).⁵ Eckhart puts forward in this manner the subject theme of true humility, which he will take up both in his Latin works and in the works in the vernacular. The theme belongs to the context in which philosophy came to be compared with theology and which was developed in Paris during the second half of the 13th century. This topic was particularly discussed in Paris at the time Eckhart wrote this sermon. The philosophers are the radical Aristotelians, the masters of arts, lecturers and commentators on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, partisans of an aristocracy of the mind. The theologians are the custodians of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Paris. They challenged the possibility of reaching perfect beatitude in this life. As Alain de Libera has emphasized,⁶ the question of humility is the favorite battleground between the two factions. The alternative is simple. On the one hand, there is the greatness of soul, the magnanimity of the aristocrat, of the thinker; on the other, humility, the virtue of the Christian and of the beggar.

In his academic sermon, the young lecturer on the *Sentences* appeals to the theological tradition that exalted the virtue of humility above the arrogance of self-assured thought. But Eckhart interprets humility as consciousness of one's own limits and, thus, opposes the knowledge of things to the knowledge of oneself. True interiority coincides in this way, for Eckhart, with true humility. Alongside the authority of Augustine (to whom, not by chance, Petrarch will appeal in a similar context), Eckhart artfully quotes the founder of the *Studium Generale* of Cologne and the greatest

⁵ Eckhart, *Sermo Paschalis*, n. 13, LW V, 144, 11–12.

⁶ Alain de Libera, *Sur l'humilité* (Paris: 1988), 61.

astronomer of the Middle Ages. The first is Albert the Great, the well-known university professor, great commentator on Aristotle and worthy scholar; the second is Ptolemy, the famous Greek scientist whose cosmological system would remain the dominant scientific paradigm until the Copernican revolution. Their presence in an academic sermon, written for a qualified audience of Parisian intellectuals, is, no doubt, strategic. Eckhart appeals to Albert the Great and Ptolemy, men of science who are very well known in the university circles, to bear witness to his new interpretation of humility.

QUESTIONS

In the manner of all masters of theology, Eckhart certainly discussed a great number of questions. Only four, however, which come from the two Parisian appointments, have survived. To these we can add the *Rationes Equardi*, included as *contra* arguments in a question against Gonsalvus Hispanus.⁷ The following are the titles of Eckhart's *Parisian Questions*:⁸

1. Utrum in deo sit idem esse et intelligere?
[Are Existence and Understanding the same in God?]
2. Utrum intelligere angeli, ut dicit actionem, sit suum esse?
[Is an Angel's Understanding, as it denotes an action, the same as his Existence?]
3. Utrum laus dei in patria sit nobilior eius dilectione in via? fragm.
("Rationes Equardi")
[Is the praise of God in heaven more excellent than the love of God in this life?]
—fragment. ["The Arguments of Eckhart"]
4. Utrum aliquem motum esse sine termino implicet contradictionem?
[Does any motion without a terminus imply a contradiction?]
5. Utrum in corpore Christi morientis in cruce remanserint formae elementorum?
[Did the form of the elements remain in the body of Christ while dying on the Cross?]

⁷ *Solutio rationum Equardi de praeeminencia intellectus respectu voluntatis*, LW V, 64–71.

⁸ To these we now have to add the four newly discovered Questions identified by Markus Vinzent and the fragment identified by Fr Senner. The Questions identified by Markus Vinzent are noted in the list of authentic Latin works listed above. The fragment identified by Fr Senner has not yet been published.

To these five we can now add the following four questions:

6. Utrum omnipotentia quae est in Deo debeat attendi secundum potentiam Absolutam vel secundum potentiam ordinatam?
[Whether the omnipotence which is in God ought to be considered according to absolute or ordained power?]
7. Utrum essentia dei esset actualior quam proprietas?
[Whether the essence of God is more actual than a property?]
8. Utrum diversitas esset relatio realis vel rationis?
[Whether diversity is a real relation or a relation of reason?]
9. Utrum differentia secundum rationem sit prior quam differentia secundum rem?
[Whether a difference in respect of reason is prior to a difference in respect of the thing?]

Historians date questions one to three to the years 1302–03 (the first appointment as *magister*), and the last two to the years 1311–13 (second appointment).

Of the five questions listed above, the first two as well as the so-called “*Rationes Eyardi*” have come down to us through the codex *Avignon, Bibliothèque Municipale, Ms. 1071*. The latter is a miscellaneous codex that contains questions by Thomas of Bailly, Arnaldus of Toulouse, Hervaeus Natalis, and a man named Johannes Sapiens (John of Pouilly).⁹ All the questions deal with subjects that were widely discussed at the time between Franciscans and Dominicans: the superiority of love with respect to the intellect in the beatific vision, whether freedom resides in the will rather than in the intellect, the plurality of substantial forms, and so on. The Avignonesse codex can thus be considered a thematic collection, composed, most probably by a Franciscan, in order to show the argumentative weakness of the Dominican claims. Eckhart’s questions contained within the codex were not therefore put into circulation by the Master himself, but were inserted there by his opponents.

In both texts, Eckhart focuses on the analysis of the concept of thought and being (on God: Question I, on the angels: Question II) and on the relation between thought and being. “*Esse*” is the principle according to which there exist created things determined by space and time. Thought,

⁹ L. Amoròs, “Introduction,” in Fr Gonsalvi Hispani, OFM, *Quaestiones disputatae et de quodlibet* (Quarrachi: 1935), i–lxxviii, especially liii–lv.

"*intelligere*", on the other hand, is not determined by Aristotelian ontology; it is, rather, the negation of any kind of determination. In this sense, therefore, it is nonexistent and uncreated.¹⁰ Eckhart is working with a precise and defined concept of "*esse*" which he understands as a synonym of "*ens*" (being): it is the being of a thing that determines and limits a thing ("*esse formaliter inhaerens*").¹¹ God, therefore, insofar as he is an intellect, is not a created being, the being of things, but is the principle and essential cause of being. Eckhart adds that the proper being of the created thing is in God as in its cause, namely in the divine intellect. God, thus, is first and foremost the purity of being (*puritas essendi*).¹² This expression, which is found, as we shall see, also in the *Commentary on the Book of Wisdom*, does not signify an additional way of designating being, but rather, as Gilson claimed,¹³ a purity from being.

The proper being of God is a being eternally converging on himself because of his intellectual nature. For only the intellect can reflect on itself,¹⁴ excluding any element alien to itself. The intellectual being of God is what Eckhart will call in some of his German sermons *isticheit*¹⁵ (i.e. "is-ness"). Eckhart explicitly acknowledges this point of view also in his second question.¹⁶ *Intelligere* is not a singular property of a first cause, but one dimension of reality. To this dimension, namely the "*regio intellectus*",¹⁷ there belongs all that is beyond being, efficient causality, and space and time. To this dimension belong both God and man. The first metaphysical result of his reflections, begun in the *Discourses* (*Die Reden*), which were written in the vernacular two years earlier, is the coessential connection of human and divine knowledge. With this precise doctrine, Eckhart, as can be seen from the third question, situates himself within the Dominican tradition of the supremacy of the intellect. He publicly defends this

¹⁰ See R. Imbach, *Deus est intelligere. Das Verhältnis von Sein und Denken in seiner Bedeutung für das Gottesverständnis bei Thomas von Aquin und in den Pariser Quaestiones Meister Eckharts* (Fribourg: 1976), 153–57.

¹¹ Eckhart, *Utrum in Deo sit idem esse et intelligere*, n. 9, LW V, 46.

¹² Eckhart, *Utrum in Deo sit idem esse et intelligere*, n. 9, LW V, 45, 1.

¹³ E. Gilson, *La philosophie au Moyen âge. Des origines patristiques à la fin du XIV siècle* (Paris: 1962), 696.

¹⁴ Eckhart, *Utrum laus Dei in patria sit nobilior eius dilectione in via*, n. 13, LW V, 61, 7–9.

¹⁵ See A. Beccarisi, "Philosophische Neologismen zwischen Latein und Volkssprache: 'istic' und 'isticheit' bei Meister Eckhart," *Recherches de théologie et de philosophie médiévales* 70 (2003), 97–126.

¹⁶ Eckhart, *Utrum intelligere angeli, ut dicit actionem, sit suum esse*, n. 7, LW V, 53.

¹⁷ Eckhart, *Sermo LIV*, 1, n. 525, LW IV, 443.

central doctrine against the attacks of the Parisian Franciscans. But this is not only a defense of intellectualism against the voluntarism of the Franciscans. Rather, Eckhart attempts to reach a point of view from which it is possible to go beyond the naturalistic interpretation of man and the world. This point of view consists in the acknowledgement of the immediate dependence of man on God insofar as he is an intellect.

The last two questions on the list (*Utrum aliquem motum esse sine termino implicet contradictionem?* and *Utrum in corpore Christi morientis in cruce remanserint formae elementorum?*) are transmitted by the manuscript Cod. Vat. Lat. 1086. This codex, which originated in the same university world as the one we have already discussed, derives from the work of the Augustinian Prosper of Reggio Emilia, famous for having also been the master of Dante. The codex is a collection of *reportationes* (notes) from questions in which Prospero had participated during his Parisian studies. It is divided into two parts. The first is a collection of questions from the academic year 1311–12 and the second reports questions from the year 1313–14. Eckhart is present in both groups. In this case also, the questions were not written and put into circulation by Eckhart himself. They are in fact notes taken down by students in class. The questions proceed in a conventional manner, in which Eckhart presupposes an understanding of the doctrine of Thomas, in particular in the second question, where he defends the unity of substantial form. Of some interest may be the fact that, both in the first and in the second question, Eckhart appeals to the Neoplatonic system of emanations to argue for his position.¹⁸

¹⁸ Editor's note: in a forthcoming article in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 63 (2012), Markus Vinzent, in an extended version of a lecture given at the International Medieval Congress, Leeds, 2010, publicizes the discovery of new Eckhart *Quaestiones*. These are found in Ms Vat. Lat., f. 222v–224r. Heretofore, Bernhard Geyer and Joseph Koch held that they were not composed by Eckhart. I have included these new *Quaestiones* as an addition to the list of Latin works at the beginning of this chapter. These four *Quaestiones* have been included as a supplement to the LW. Also, Fr Walter Senner OP has identified a fragment of an Eckhart *Quaestio* in MS Troyes, Médiathèque de l'Agglomération Troyenne (formerly: Bibliothèque Municipale), Ms. 260, fol.85v marg. He will edit and publish this discovery. (The editor is grateful to Loris Sturlese and Markus Vinzent for clarification about this new Eckhart discovery.)

SERMO DIE BEATI AUGUSTINI PARISUS HABITUS
(VAS QUASI AURI SOLIDUM)

It is during his first appointment in Paris that another academic sermon read on St Augustine's day (28 August) was most probably written. The editor of the sermon, Bernhard Geyer,¹⁹ has already remarked on the presence of the commentary by Clarembald of Arras and Thierry of Chartres to the *De Trinitate* of Boethius, on whose importance Andreas Speer has recently insisted.²⁰

The verses are from Ecclesiasticus 50:10 *Quasi auri solidum omni lapide pretioso*. They are used by Eckhart to present his own personal vision of wisdom or science. Augustine has, in effect, united within himself the three manifestations of Wisdom: he was a theologian, a logician, and an ethicist. Quoting almost literally from the commentary by Clarembaldus of Arras, Eckhart moves on to establish the ways in which philosophy is divided—ways which correspond to the three principal activities of man: thinking, talking, and acting. In this way, one obtains the division of theory, logic, and “*ethica sive practica*”.

Theoretical activity is further divided into mathematics, physics, and “*ethica sive theologia*”.²¹ The idea that theology is also ethics is new and is found for the first time in this Eckhartian text. But what does Eckhart mean by this, and especially what is the difference between “*ethica sive practica*” and “*ethica sive theologia*”? It is evident that, for Eckhart, the word “ethica” has two meanings. The first is relevant to action, namely to the “*praxis*” in the Greek sense of the term (hence “*practica*”). It is the properly human context of acting defined through a complex of activities designed to reach a particular goal.²² The second meaning of “*ethica*” concerns the dimension of the mind. In this sense, it is rather theology, because the theologian or ethicist has a more subtle intuition of the ideas of things that are in the divine mind before they are incarnated in

¹⁹ B. Geyer, *Einleitung*, in LW V, 87–88; K. Ruh, *Meister Eckhart. Theologe, Prediger, Mystiker* (Munich: 1985), 24–25.

²⁰ A. Speer, “‘Ethica sive theologia’”. Wissenschaftseinteilung und Philosophieverständnis bei Meister Eckhart,” in *Was ist Philosophie im Mittelalter?*, ed. J.A. Aertsen and A. Speer (Akten des X. Internationalen Kongresses für mittelalterliche Philosophie der S.I.E.P.M. von 25. bis 30. August 1997 in Erfurt), *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 26 (Berlin: 1998), 683–93, especially 683.

²¹ Eckhart, *Vas auri solidum*, n. 2, LW V, 89 and 1–90, 1.

²² G. Wieland, *Ethica—scientia practica. Die Anfänge der philosophischen Ethik im 13. Jahrhundert* (Münster: 1981), in particular 52–129.

bodies.²³ In this sense, therefore, ethics as theology is an intuitive kind of knowledge which goes beyond the descriptive and discursive rationality of logic and mathematics. But in what sense then is theology also ethics? There emerges, at this point, the project presented in the *Discourses* (*Reden*)—a text written by Eckhart in the vernacular, in Erfurt between 1294 and 1298—namely, the sketch for a metaphysical foundation for morality. Wisdom, insofar as it grounds external action, has already in itself an ethical dimension. Augustine, for whom Eckhart says wisdom is virtue, demonstrates this.²⁴

TRACTATUS SUPER ORATIONE DOMINICA

A commentary on the *Pater Noster* (the Lord's Prayer) also belongs to the group of "academic works", but it is impossible to settle on any secure date. Erich Seeberg, the editor, considers it to be an early work²⁵ whose main sources are the works of the church fathers and the *Catena aurea*.

OPUS TRIPARTITUM

The *Opus tripartitum* is a systematic work which covers the three different activities of the theologian: reading of the texts, disputation, and preaching. These three activities are dealt with in an original manner. As it is described in the *Prologus generalis*, the *Opus tripartitum* was projected in the following way: a first work, *Opus propositionum*, covering over 1000 and more propositions, divided into 14 treatises which ground the totality of the theologian's work; the *Opus quaestionum*, a collection of 1000 or more questions; and an *Opus expositionum* divided into two parts, the first being the exegetical commentary or properly called *Expositiones*, and the second, which is made up of sermons. Eckhart takes a fundamentally pedagogical point of view, directly connected to his role as a teacher. Eckhart spent his whole life writing this work but he never completed it. At present, only the *Prologues* are known as well as a substantial part of the *Opus expositionum*. Of the latter, there only remain the two commentaries

²³ Eckhart, *Vas auri solidum*, n. 3, LW V, 90, 8–10.

²⁴ Eckhart, *Vas auri solidum*, n. 8, LW V, 96, 7.

²⁵ LW V, 105. [See the list of Latin works above. A strong argument can be made that while this work is related to Eckhart's academic concerns, it is not an "academic" work. Thus, it should perhaps be placed with Eckhart's "non-academic" works—editor.]

on Genesis, and the commentaries on Exodus, Wisdom, and St John's Gospel.

In his exegetical works, Eckhart does not comment on every verse of the holy text, but rather chooses certain significant lines (*auctoritates*), and he often comments on just one word.

In the *Prologue*, Eckhart informs us of the reason and criterion for his choice. He chooses but few lines because it is not necessary to comment on them all, given that only some of them have become proper *Auctoritates*, containing the highest degree of truth and doctrine.²⁶ In other words, the verses which Eckhart considers are only the most well known and famous, that is, the most discussed and the most often quoted lines from the compendia of theology. These were then used as the central reference point in arguments. In the second prologue to the *Opus expositionum* in particular, Eckhart declares that he will follow the model of Thomas Aquinas.²⁷

My analysis of the works which constitute the *Opus tripartitum* will follow the order of the different phases of its composition that the manuscript tradition brings to light. I will, thus, distinguish in my presentation three chronological kernels that have a co-respective correspondence within the manuscript tradition:²⁸

Erfurt, Cod. Amplon. F 181 (E)

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud. Misc. 222 (L)

Trier, Cod. 72/1056 Kues, Cod. 21 (CT)

Erfurt, Cod. Amplon. F 181 (E): Prologues, Genesis I draft, Ecclesiasticus (complete), Prologus, Wisdom (complete), Exodus (draft).

²⁶ Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus tripartitum*, n. 3–6, LW I/2, 149–51.

²⁷ See W. Goris, "Prout iudicaverit expedire. Zur Interpretation des zweiten Prologs zum 'Opus expositionum' Meister Eckharts," *Medioevo* 20 (1994), 233–78; N. Bray, "Auctoritates bibliche e Quaestiones dottrinali nell' *Opus Tripartitum* di Eckhart e nella *Summa theologiae* di Tommaso," in *Per perscrutationem philosophicam. Neue Perspektiven der mittelalterlichen Forschung*, ed. A. Beccarisi, P. Porro, and R. Imbach (Hamburg: 2008), 156–83.

²⁸ See L. Sturlese, "Meister Eckhart in der Bibliotheca Amploniana. Neues zur Datierung des 'Opus tripartitum,'" in *Die Bibliotheca Amploniana. Ihre Bedeutung im Spannungsfeld von Aristotelismus, Nominalismus und Humanismus*, ed. A. Speer, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 26 (Berlin: 1995), 434–46; Sturlese, "Maestro Eckhart, Tabula per alphabetum in librum Parabolarum Genesis, ritrovata e per la prima volta pubblicata da Loris Sturlese," in *Scritti in onore di Eugenio Garin* (Pisa: 1987), 39–50.

The Prologus Generalis

This text is constituted of two parts. In the first (nn. 1–11) the author presents the intention and division of the work and its method. Eckhart is fully aware of the novelty of the enterprise and warns the reader not to be alarmed by some of the affirmations which, in appearance, may seem dubious, false, or *monstrous*. Eckhart adds a few preliminary observations which, according to him, are necessary in order to understand what he is about to say.

1. It is necessary to distinguish between general terms such as *being*, *unity*, *truth*, *goodness* (the so-called transcendental terms), and *accidents*. The first are prior with respect to concrete things, subsisting and causative. Accidents, on the other hand, receive their being by inhering in a subject, not giving being to the composite of which they are a part. Thus, they do not subsist because they are dependent on their being part of a substance and as caused (that is, brought into being) by the subject in which they inhere.

2. Clearly presupposing the Neoplatonic schema of emanations (in particular that of the *Liber de causis*), Eckhart declares that that which is superior and prior receives nothing from that which on the scale of being is inferior to it, but rather it itself bestows its own properties to the inferior beings, in particular unity and indivisibility. From this perspective, unity is something more than a mere gathering together of elements: the whole is such in virtue of a principle both superior and prior to the individual elements, which bestows unity and harmony to the complex whole. The latter derives its structure from the superior principle.

3. The third point concerns the structure of the *Opus tripartitum*, and, from a certain point of view, is paradoxical. Eckhart claims, in effect, that the *Opus quaestionum* and the *Opus expositionum* are but of small use when taken in themselves, because both depend, and are grounded on, the *Opus propositionum*, which constitutes, in a certain sense, the metaphysical part of his work. As we know, there is nothing left of the *Opus propositionum*, apart from its prologue. In it, we learn that the *Opus propositionum* was to be divided into 14 treatises that were to analyze one concept and its opposite, according to the following schema:

Treatise 1	To be and being	Nothing
Treatise 2	Unity and one	Multiple
Treatise 3	Truth and true	False
Treatise 4	Goodness and good	Evil

Treatise 5	Love and charity	Sin
Treatise 6	Honesty, virtue, straightness	Dishonesty, vice, obliqueness
Treatise 7	Whole	Part
Treatise 8	Common and indistinct	Proper and distinct
Treatise 9	Superior	Inferior
Treatise 10	First and last	Neither first nor last
Treatise 11	Idea and reason	Lack of form and privation
Treatise 12	Quo est	Quod est
Treatise 13	God, supreme being	Non being
Treatise 14	Substance	Accident

The *Opus quaestionum*, on the other hand, is structured according to the intentions of the author, following the schema of Thomas's *Summa theologiae*. Eckhart intended to examine the most important questions from this latter work, in particular those most discussed within the community.

The third part of the *Opus tripartitum*, namely the *Opus expositionum*, is divided into two parts: the first, containing the *expositiones* on the books of the Scriptures, and the second, which contains sermons. Already in this context, Eckhart warns the reader that he will not comment on all of the books of the Bible, but only a selection of pericopes that are particularly significant, thus following the examples set by Augustine whose *expositiones* indeed only consider some of the biblical *Auctoritates*.

In order to present an example of the method and structure of the *Opus tripartitum*, Eckhart uses the second part (nos. 12–22). He presents the first proposition of the *Opus propositionum* (*Esse est Deus*), the first question of the *Opus quaestionum* (*Utrum Deus sit*), and the beginning of Genesis 1:1 “*In principio creavit Deus caelum et terram*” from the *Opus expositionem*.

Lectiones et sermones super Eccli. 24:23–31

Belonging to the *Opus tripartitum*, there have come down to us two sermons and two lessons on Ecclesiasticus, Ch. 24, 2:23–31. In contrast to the other works which constitute the *Opus tripartitum*, the two lessons and sermons on Ecclesiasticus 24 are more easily datable. The occasion for the composition of the two sermons, which are perfectly elaborated works, is tied to the provincial chapters of the Dominican order, during which, together with administrative tasks of various kinds, there was also a program of a didactical and spiritual nature. The sermons comment on two verses from the reading of the Mass for the Nativity of Mary (8 September), which was the date on which the chapters were summoned. The probable date of composition is between 1302 and 1310.

The first sermon is constructed according to the habitual method: the Dominican Master singles out individual parts, or parts of sentences, as the basis on which to present the doctrine he wishes to express. In Sermon I, for example, a considerable part of the text is concerned simply with the development of the implicit signification within the pronoun *ego*, namely the first word of the pericope under consideration (nn. 8–10). The sermon follows the proper structure of that literary genre, in which, on presenting the theme and eventually the protheme, there follows a development meticulously divided into several parts, supported by the exemplifications of *auctoritates*, *argument*, and *exempla*. There is also an abundant use of other pericopes from the Scriptures, quotations from the church fathers and masters, a repertoire of stories and anecdotes for examples, as well as an array of philosophical concepts. The first part of the sermon (nn. 1–16) is introductory in nature. Eckhart explains the character of the true preacher using the help of the biblical text. We reach the heart of the matter at paragraph eight in which the words of the text refer to divine, uncreated knowledge. In conclusion, the same words are applied to the Virgin Mary, whose nativity is being celebrated.

Here we find developed the terms of the love/consciousness relation (nn. 8–9), a classic argument of the times, but one on which Eckhart dwells with particular interest, trying to bring out all the nuances. He takes up the will/intellect relation, which the Dominican school usually gave priority, and develops it in his own distinctive manner. More specific still is the insistence on the subject of justice and the relation between the just and justice. For Eckhart, justice is not something to follow or describe in a certain way, nor is a man just because he adapts himself to justice or behaves in conformity with it. From the point of view of knowledge (*gnosis*), only the just man, that is to say, he who is detached, is a man of intellect, a man of the spirit. Only the intellect (n. 10) is, in effect, capable of absolute substance, that is, actual divine wisdom. Pursuing a theory which was perhaps already present in Dietrich of Freiberg, the intellect is considered here not as a potentiality of the soul, but as something above nature, a truly divine spark within the soul.

More relevant still is the Lesson that follows Sermon I. There, the first part of the verse of Ecclesiasticus 24:23 is immediately set aside for the sake of a focused analysis of the second part "*flores mei fructus*". Here, Eckhart presents the idea of the coincidence of opposites, which drew the attention of Nicholas of Cusa. The divine, says the Dominican, is not like the nature of the created. In the divine, the fruit is the flower, the maximum is the minimum. Everything is in everything. It is the property of the

divine not to have a more or a less, a maximum or a minimum. Eckhart, in choosing a markedly Neoplatonic option, denies efficient and final causality to the divine, preferring that which, from Albert the Great onwards, is called essential causality. The effects of this causality are always precontained, in the most eminent way, in their own cause.

As in all of his works, in Latin or German, Eckhart underlines not the otherness, but the immanence of the divine with respect to the created beings. In being the contemporaneous principle (*flos*) and end (*fructus*) of the created beings, God is like the circumference which is everywhere and whose center is nowhere. Eckhart, thus, does not contrast an objective God with created beings. Rather, the only contrast which is drawn is between two ways of considering reality: one, from the point of view of the created being, imprisoned in common sense, a reality which is only a more or less ordered whole made up of separate and finite entities, distinguished one from the other, in which it is possible and often necessary to establish a more or less (i.e. some proportion). The other is divine, renouncing completely the possibility of a comparison, acknowledging that beyond or at the foundation of every distinction there is a unitary principle of intellectual nature in which it is not possible anymore to set a more or less because it is always and utterly unitary in itself, in the smallest as in the greatest entity. To the eye of the divine, the fruit is flower, the center is the circumference. Also in Sermon II, the rhetorical technique of explaining the verse one word at a time is applied by attributing to each word a theological, moral, and spiritual signification.

In paragraph 38 the words "*initium dulcoris*" are explained, claiming that the beginning of a thing is its idea, and that the idea of a thing is prior and superior to the thing itself, insofar as it is its principle and cause. We shall find this theory again in the prologue to the *Commentary on St John's Gospel*. Paragraph 38 expresses synthetically one of the cornerstones of Eckhartian metaphysics: the nothingness of the created beings and the being of God.

It is to the themes concerning being, his research from the point of view of the created, and the relation between being eternally and being created that Lesson 2 is also mostly devoted. It is divided into four parts: the first (n. 41) explains Ecclesiasticus 24:27: *Hereditas mea super mel et favum*, and touches on the theme of divine inheritance. The second part, which is longer and more relevant (nn. 42–61), examines the important topic of analogy; the third part (nn. 62–67) interprets Ecclesiasticus 24:30 *qui operantur in me non peccabunt*, and turns on the theme of the being of God, namely justice. The fourth part, in conclusion, is rather short

(nn. 68–70) and examines Ecclesiasticus 24:31, on the theme of light, both internal and external.

THE COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF WISDOM

Expositio sapientiae is the only commentary from the *Opus expositionum* which refers to all the chapters of the book, with the exception of the second. In each chapter, however, as in the other cases, Eckhart interprets only a few lines (the *auctoritates*). For example, from the first chapter, he comments only on verses 1, 5, 7, 13, 14, and 15, and from the third chapter, only the first line, *Iustorum animae in manu dei sunt*, and so on and so forth.

The commentary on each individual verse should be considered, in this work as in the others from the *Opus expositionum*, as a treatise—long or short—which is complete in itself and which often bears no relation to the others. The commented line serves as a theme (*auctoritas*) that is developed within the treatise, but there is no systematic interpretation of the sacred book.

The only exception to this method will be, as we shall see, the *Liber parabolarum rerum naturalium* known as the *Liber parabolarum Genesis* (*Gen. II*). Because of the lack of a systematic account of the commentary on the book of Wisdom, as in the case of other Eckhartian commentaries, it is not possible to provide an exhaustive summary of the commentary as such. I shall therefore consider only a few of the *Auctoritates* which bring to light the method adopted by Eckhart in his biblical exegesis. In particular, I shall analyze 1:14 *Creavit enim, ut essent omnia* and 7:27, *Et cum sit una, omnia potest*.

The object of the commentary of the first *Auctoritas* is not the creation as such, but rather the aim of the creation. Eckhart distinguishes between two senses of creation that together tend towards the total aim of creation, namely the being of the universe. For the first sense (nn. 19–34), Eckhart presents the pericope according to its common signification, namely: God created in order that things should be, namely, should have being in the nature of things. To understand the verse, Eckhart says, it is first necessary to observe two things: firstly, that the becoming of things, both natural and artificial (change, generation), depends on second causes (celestial intelligence, celestial movers, and celestial movements); and secondly, that the being of all things depends only and exclusively on God.

Two considerations derive from this, or rather two ways of interpreting the pericope: the first is developed over eight *notanda* distinguishing that

which in other works he calls the *duplex esse* of created beings, namely, in the mind of God and outside of God. Creation corresponds only to the second moment, namely the *collatio esse* (bestowal of being): things (*res*), thought by God as *rationes*, are produced outside of him, created by him, precisely like an architect who realizes outside of himself the model he already has in mind. It is a theme which Eckhart develops also in the first *Commentary on Genesis*.²⁹ Here, however, he particularly insists on denying the attribute of existence to *res in mente Dei* (things in the mind of God). As in the first Parisian question, written during the same period, Eckhart distinguishes two aspects in a thing: one relative to its quiddity (*quod quid est*) and the other relative to its existence. Quiddity, says Eckhart, following Albert the Great, is not produced by any efficient or final cause. This is shown by the fact that the proposition “man is an animal” is true independently of man’s existing or not. The term “is” in the proposition does not predicate existence of the subject, but is merely the copula between the subject “man” and the predicate “animal” (*secundo adjacens*). The being of the thing, on the other hand, its existence, needs an external cause (efficient and final), namely, God: it is this second aspect to which the verse *creavit ut essent omnia* refers. This is why a thing *in causis suis essentialibus et originalibus* (in God) does not have being: a thing which is thought “is” not, properly speaking. For the thing receives a being (i.e. concretely exists) only when it is externally produced by some efficient cause. Now, Eckhart says, all things are in God as in their cause. Moreover, the reasons of the things, he says, are neither created nor can they be created. For they exist only as causes of things, they thus correspond to the states of the universal which Albert spoke of in his commentary on *Physics*.³⁰ This guarantees that knowledge is universal and scientific. Things which exist outside the mind of God or of man are, in contrast, changeable, creatable, and created. Thus, it appears clearly that, according to Eckhart, the *creavit omnia* with which the *Sapientia* deals refers to the “productive” moment of creation, when the efficient and final causes intervene, that is to say, when God as Creator intervenes. The example of the definition “man is a rational animal”—true regardless of the concrete existence of man—demonstrates that the essential aspect of a thing, its essence or quiddity, and therefore its definition, belong to a different order from the order of concrete things. Essences do not depend on extrinsic causes; they

²⁹ For example in *Gen. I*, n. 25, LW I, 204, 7–13.

³⁰ Albertus Magnus, *Physica* I 1 1, ed. P. Hoßfeld (Münster: 1987), 93, 2, 69–71.3, 76–83.

are eternal, immutable, uncreated, and they are as uncreatable as the God who thinks them. For they belong to the realm of the intellect. Things, on the other hand, "are"; they exist concretely in space and time, but for that, they depend on extrinsic causes, the final and efficient causes. They are thus created and alterable, and thus belong to the region of being. A question arises again which had already been discussed in the first Parisian question in which Eckhart, on the basis of similar arguments (*esse in causis suis originalibus non est esse, sed intellectus* etc.), concluded with the preeminence of the Intellect with respect to Being in God.

This explains what Eckhart, in other contexts, especially in the works in the vernacular, expresses in a more metaphoric language, thus: (1) The principles of things and also the accidents are not properly defined as created, but as co-created, because they do not have being other than the being of the supposite in which they are. (2) Every created thing considered in itself is nothing (pure nothing, as he will say in the *Commentary on Exodus*, an expression judged to be dubious by the Inquisition trial in 1326). He who loves created beings (i.e. that which is determined in space and time) loves nothing, a doctrine we find again in the *Liber Benedictus*, where this is one of the motives of consolation for man. (3) He who prays for the created things, which as was shown in the first part of this treatise, are changeable, prays for nothing, precisely because things which are really creatures are in themselves a pure nothingness.

Having considered the verse *creavit ut essent omnia* from the point of view of the created beings, Eckhart interprets the same *auctoritas* from the point of view of the totality of the universe and comments on the *omnia*. Namely, the verse means not only that the aim of creation is the *collatio esse*, but also *totum universum* (LW II, 356, 2). This is an occasion for Eckhart to confront a "difficult question" (*quaestio et difficultas, multos gravans* [LW II, 356, 8–9]), namely, how it is possible that, from the first principle, there should derive immediately the first created intelligence and from the latter, subsequently all the other things, as Avicenna and his followers claim:³¹ *ab uno non fit nisi unum*. Eckhart interprets the Avicennian formula on the basis of the verse of Wisdom in the following way: from the simple one, there comes to be the universe, as one-everything. Since, on Thomas's authority, God is a simple one, but *multiplex ratione*, in the same way, the universe will be a simple one, but multiple, distinguished

³¹ Cf. Avicenna, *Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina* V–X, ed. S. Van Riet, 9, 4, 481, 50–51; on this question, see the contribution to this volume by Alessandro Palazzo.

into parts and different degrees of perfection. If, in addition, says Eckhart, we are asked the reason for the multiplicity of the created, then it can be explained only on the basis of what has already been said: that which is created descends from the one and indistinct and in this way comes to being, while that which is uncreated (*rationes rerum*) is in God according to his own simplicity, unity, and distinction. In other words: the multiplicity of the created things has, as a metaphysical and gnoseological assumption, the unity and simplicity of the divine mind, in which the created beings participate.

L=Oxford: Genesis I and Genesis II (i.e. the *Liber parabolarum rerum naturalium*)

The L codex, preserved in Oxford, is important for at least two reasons: it has brought to light the existence of a “new” version of the *Liber parabolarum*, which in this codex contains not only a *Tabula auctoritatum*, but also a *Tabula contentorum*, which, however, does not figure again in the later Cusan codex. A further peculiarity concerning the *Liber parabolarum* is that, in this manuscript, it precedes rather than follows, as in the Cusa codex, the so-called first *Commentary on Genesis*. As L. Sturlese has demonstrated,³² this shows that the *Liber parabolarum Genesis* does not belong to the *Opus tripartitum* and that it is a completed work. The late version which is at the basis of the so-called C-T version has moved the *Liber parabolarum Genesis* after *Gen. I*. Thus, the *Tabula contentorum* which, in the new editorial project, there was no longer any sense to keep, was removed, and the *Liber parabolarum* becomes the second edition of the *Commentary on Genesis*.

Let us move on to the text.

Expositio libri Genesis (Gen. I)

The first *Commentary on Genesis* is the first of Eckhart’s exegetical works which opens the *Opus expositionum* in the versions of Erfurt and Kues.

As in the case of other works, so also in the first *Commentary on Genesis*, Eckhart does not comment on all the verses. His attention is concentrated on the first three chapters where he comments on almost all the lines. He comments only on one verse in chapters 12, 15, and 19.

In this work, Eckhart appeals to two kinds of interpretation: the literal and the moral, though, in some passages, probably written at a later stage,

³² L. Sturlese, “Meister Eckhart in der Bibliotheca Amploniana” (see note 29 above).

there arises the need for an allegorical (*parabolice*) interpretation of Genesis. Perhaps, driven by the necessity of a more scientific interpretation of the first book of the Bible, Eckhart came to write a second commentary on Genesis, in which the only exegetical method which is used is that of the parable.

The themes which Eckhart takes into consideration in *Gen. I* are reflections on being, which we have already seen in the book of Wisdom and which we will find yet again in the Exodus, and a discussion of image, which, as Sturlese has discovered,³³ can be found in almost identical terms in Dietrich of Freiberg. For this reason, I shall examine in detail here the question of the image (n. 115, Auct. *Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram*). It is a theme which, as Eckhart himself affirms, has been often discussed,³⁴ not only in the commentaries on the Scriptures, but also in the sermons both in German, in particular Quint 16a and b (DW I), and in Latin.

In the passage from Genesis with which we are concerned, Eckhart distinguishes between the irrational creatures and the rational or intellectual ones. While the first are produced according to the likeness of what is in God, namely of the ideas which are in God, following a well-known Augustinian doctrine, the second are created in the image of God himself. The reason for this similarity, or rather for the fact of being in the image of God, is to be found in the intellect which is proper to rational beings. The main property of the human intellect is, according to Eckhart, that of becoming all things. It is, thus, a founding principle which Eckhart says, "proceeds from God" (i.e. emanates from God), following a doctrine which is found also in Dietrich and which is defined as "*procedere ut imago*", that is to say that it proceeds in the manner of the image.³⁵ Thanks to its particular origin, that which emanates from God, man's intellect can become, in turn, an image of everything, of the whole universe, which reproduces the same creative work of God. In this sense, man is a divine image and also a microcosm, insofar as he resembles all being, not of one being in particular. This interesting reading of the human intellect is made

³³ L. Sturlese, "Dietrich di Freiberg lettore di Eckhart?" *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* 85 (2006), 437–53.

³⁴ Eckhart, *In Gen. I*, n. 115, LW I, 270, 2–4: "Auctoritas ista a diversis sanctis et in diversis locis tractata est, et de ipsa notavi diffuse".

³⁵ See K. Flasch, "Procedere ut imago. Das Hervorgehen des Intellekts aus seinem göttlichen Grund bei Meister Dietrich, Meister Eckhart und Berthold von Moosburg," in *Abendländische Mystik im Mittelalter (Symposion Kloster Engelberg 1984)*, ed. K. Ruh (Stuttgart: 1986), 125–34, and especially 125–27.

by Eckhart on the basis of the authority of Aristotle and Avicenna: the human intellect contemporaneously shows a receptive aspect (becoming, in a certain sense, all things) and an active aspect (the intellect insofar as intellect contains in it the totality of beings, not this or that being). In this sense, Eckhart goes beyond the traditional division of agent and possible intellect. Man's intellect is in the image of God because it emanates from him in the manner of the image and because this is the image of the world in its totality. This theory was, however, tacitly criticized by Dietrich of Freiberg, who quotes this passage almost literally in his *De visione beatifica*. Theodoric had many reasons for rejecting the Eckhartian doctrine of the image. First of all, Eckhart denied the foundation of Dietrich's philosophy of the intellect, namely the substantiality of the intellect as agent. Dietrich, too, acknowledges an intellect such as the Eckhartian, suspended between being and non-being. However, the condition for the existence of the possible intellect is, according to Dietrich, the existence of the agent intellect, a substance essentially in actuality, which is the synthesis of all possible intellections, emanating in an active and intellectual manner from its principle and constituting itself through this activity. In other words, Dietrich preserves the Aristotelian categories which he interprets in the light of the *Liber de causis* and the *De Trinitate* of Augustine. Eckhart, on the other hand, goes beyond the traditional division into agent intellect and possible intellect. The intellect, according to him, is the possibility of becoming all things (*"quo est omnia fieri"*), the feature famously attributed by Aristotle to the possible intellect. For this reason, the intellect is in a certain way all things (*est quodammodo omnia*).³⁶ It thus can become an intelligible world (*"saeculum intelligibile"*).³⁷ However, in Aristotle's *De anima*, being *quodammodo omnia* is not proper to the possible intellect, but rather to the soul as such. Avicenna's formula *fiat saeculum intelligibile* refers not to the possible intellect, but rather to the rational soul. What does this mean? It means that, for Eckhart, the intellect of man as such is receptive, but not possible in the sense in which Aristotle takes it. Only this dimension of complete openness enables the unity between human and divine. This means that Eckhart actually does not admit of the existence of a principle (however intellectual) that is separate from the soul, but rather there is a rational foundation that is proper to the soul

³⁶ Aristotle, *De anima* 3, 7, 431b20.

³⁷ Avicenna, *Metaph.* 9, 7, ed. S. Van Riet, 510, 72–73.

itself which distinguishes it from living beings.³⁸ These are the features which Eckhart derives from Aristotle, Avicenna, and Augustine ("*anima est capax Dei*")³⁹ and which characterize the essence of man.

For this reason, Dietrich, quoting the theory of Eckhart, eliminates from his text the reference to the possible intellect of Aristotle. The acknowledgement of this dependence of Dietrich on Eckhart has important consequences. The most immediate concerns the dates of the broader version of *Gen. I*. If the *De visione beatifica* quotes, as it would seem, this passage from the *Commentary on Genesis*, this means that the *Opus tripartitum*, in its completed version, must be dated to the first Parisian appointment and not to 1311 as has always been thought. Another consequence is of a historical/philosophical nature. In contrast to the Eckhartian interpretation of the intellect as indetermination, pure openness, and potentiality for divine perfection, Dietrich, almost with the same terms, posits the intellect as substance in actuality. The much-discussed philosophy of the intellect of Dietrich could have arisen precisely from a reflection about image as a non-substance, developed by Eckhart within his *Commentary on Genesis*.

Liber parabolarum *Genesis*

In the *Liber parabolarum*, Eckhart abandons the exegetical method he has used up until then: there is only one exegetical sense capable of reaching the kernel of the truth of the Scriptures, peeling off the skin which encloses it. Going beyond the four senses of the Scriptures for the sake of the parable is expressed in a programmatic form only here in this work alone.

Eckhart, in effect, appeals explicitly to the works of the *theologizantes* and the *poematizantes* who, by means of stories, taught *divina*, *naturalia*, and *moralia* (LW I, 451, 2–3). The influence, moreover, of Moses Maimonides is obvious in the new method Eckhart uses: the idea of calling the

³⁸ A. Beccarisi, "Der hoechste under den meistern': Eckhart e il *De anima* di Aristotele," in *Studi sulle fonti di Meister Eckhart I*, ed. L. Sturlese (Fribourg: 2008), 15–6, and especially 24–25.

³⁹ G. Pellegrino, "Alsô ist hie sant Augustinus gelichet einem guldinen vazze': Eckhart e il *De Trinitate* di Agostino," in *Studi sulle fonti di Meister Eckhart I*, ed. L. Sturlese (Fribourg: 2008), 39–70.

title of his new enterprise *Liber paraboliarum* clearly derives from the great Jewish philosopher.⁴⁰

In *Gen. II* Eckhart's argumentation follows a rigorously logical line. One example is the first verses: *In principio creavit caelum et terram* and then *terra autem erat inanis et vacua*. After having presented the natural principles of things, to which the first line of Genesis refers to, *latenter*, Eckhart comes to explain the property of these principles to which, still *latenter* and *parabolice*, the second line refers.⁴¹ It follows, at least here, that Eckhart considers the Scriptures not as a collection of *auctoritates*, to be individually analyzed, but as a text with an organic structure, a treatise whose hidden truth must be brought to light in all its complexity. Also, the recapitulations with which Eckhart often intersperses his discussion show this, as for example n. 160.⁴²

It is obvious, then, that the *Liber paraboliarum* cannot be assimilated to the other commentaries on the Scriptures. It is the first attempt at a "scientific" reading of the sacred text. From its prologue, we learn that Eckhart intended to comment *parabolice* not only on the book of Genesis, but on all the books of the New and Old Testaments. This is shown by two characteristic features of the Oxford manuscript: (1) the presence of a *tabula contentorum* (index of contents) at the end of the commentary, and (2) the title of the commentary, which in this manuscript is *Liber paraboliarum rerum naturalium*, and not merely *Liber paraboliarum Genesis* as it appears in the Cusa codex.

In the *Liber paraboliarum*, Eckhart develops in particular the subject theme of the internal principles of things, namely form and matter, and the univocal causes of things, the *ratio superior* and *inferior*, the status of the intellect and the status of the Word.

Let us look at the text.

Having referred the reader back to the presentation given in the first commentary to Genesis, Eckhart claims that, in this second edition, he will take into consideration three themes: the production or emanation of

⁴⁰ See Y. Schwartz, "Zwischen Einheitsmetaphysik und Eineitshermeneutik: Eckharts Maimonides-Lektüre und das Datierungsproblem des *Opus Tripartitum*," in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt*, ed. A. Speer and L. Wegener, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 32 (Berlin: 2005), 259–82. See also the chapter by Schwartz in the present volume.

⁴¹ Eckhart, *Liber paraboliarum*, n. 41, LW I, 507, 7–11.

⁴² Eckhart, *Liber paraboliarum*, n. 160, LW I, 630: "Hoc tamen advertendum in fine horum capitulorum primi, secundi et tertii, quod creare sive facere dei, de quibus fit mentio primo capitulo, item dicere ipsius, de quo fit mentio primo et tertio capitulo, id ipsum sunt et significant. Sciendum ergo primo quod sicut patet ex praedictis."

the Son and Holy Spirit from the Father in eternity (*in principio*), the production or general creation of the whole universe by God in time (*creavit*), and finally, the general properties common to Creator and created (*caelum et terram*).⁴³ This last part of the line in particular, refers *latenter*, according to Eckhart, both to the extrinsic and analogous principles of the things (active and passive) and to the intrinsic and univocal principles (form and matter). This is as much as is said about the *naturalia*. The *moralia* will follow.

In the commentary on Genesis 1:1, Eckhart describes the Trinitarian process and the creation. The former is the foundation for the latter, as the principle with respect to what is principled, wherefrom there arises a distinction which had come to light in other contexts, namely between emanation and creation (*Commentary on St John's Gospel*). Emanation is indeed a kind of process which develops within the producer himself; it is an internal process, immanent to the principle itself. That which emanates (*procreatum*) is not an effect, nor is it something determined or produced by nothing. For this reason, the emanating principle is neither properly a creator nor a cause. But, rather, principle and principled, producer and product constitute a unity. A special case of this metaphysical law is the Trinity. In the Trinity or in the Trinitarian relation, Son and Holy Spirit are not created *ex nihilo*, they are thus not determined entities, but rather emanate from the Father, and therefore form with him a unity. The case of the creation, however, is different. For the creation is a kind of production from nothing, that which Eckhart calls *factio*. The effect of creation is a finite, determined entity in space and time because it is born or produced from nothing. For this reason, emanation is an eternal process, while creation is a process which comes to be in time, for it has a beginning in time and history: the nothing from which the created universe emerges. It is interesting to note how in the commentary on Genesis 1:1, Eckhart summarizes in a few lines, topics and themes of reflection addressed already in other works, as for example in the *Commentary on the Book of Wisdom* which we saw above (*Creavit ut essent omnia*). There, it can be inferred that the creative process is a process in time, whose metaphysical foundation is, however, the eternal force (emanation) proper to the divine. In this

⁴³ Eckhart, *Liber parabolarum*, n. 8, LW I, 479, 1–7: “*In principio creavit deus caelum et terram*. Verbum hoc in prima editione multipliciter exponitur. Quantum vero ad presentem intentionem sub his verbis innuitur primo productio sive emanatio filii et spiritus sancti a patre aeternaliter, item productio sive creatio generalis totius universi ab uno deo temporaliter, et plura quantum ad proprietates tam creatoris quam creaturarum.”

context, however, Trinitarian relations and creation represent particular cases of a metaphysical conception of Neoplatonic or Avicennian origin, according to which multiplicity has its grounding in that which is superior and ultimate, in the simplicity of the first cause which alone is necessary and sufficient in itself. From this comes the ontological otherness of the principle with respect to the principled. To use an example which Eckhart takes up from Augustine: the reason of the circle, that which, Platonically speaking, we can call its Idea, is not in addition as a further circle to all concrete circles of the universe, but, so to speak, precontains them all, insofar as it grounds the possibility of the knowledge of them. This harmony between *rationes naturales philosophorum* and the *parabola*e of the Scriptures becomes particularly clear when Eckhart comments on *caelum et terram* and then the *erant uterque nudi* (LW I, 499, 1–3). We said earlier that Eckhart interprets the *caelum et terram* of the biblical pericope in two ways: as the extrinsic principles of the universe which manifest themselves analogously for all the universe (active and passive) and as intrinsic principles of natural things, and in this sense, they are univocal principles (form and matter).

To the first interpretation, Eckhart devotes seven *notanda*, from which it results that active and passive do not belong to the same genus. The active principle as such acts without interruption and uniformly. In particular, it is not rooted in the passive principle, given that the action of the active on the passive is external and disappears in the absence of the active principle. This means that the passive principle as such is nothing or, rather, is a continuous becoming, because it continuously and unceasingly receives the effect of the active principle, which alone has all the perfections. It is an ontological model which Eckhart applies also in the relation between Creator and created as we can see in *Lectio I super Ecclesiasticum* to which Eckhart refers the reader.

If active and passive are the two extrinsic principles of the whole universe, matter and form, on the other hand, are the intrinsic principles of created entities (matter and form, however, constitute a sort of specific case of the more general relation between active and passive). This is an important passage given that here Eckhart explains and grounds methodologically the idea of the *unum actu*, that is, of the actual unity which always results from the actualization of matter by form. Matter and form as such (i.e. separated) do not appear in nature, but are the concrete union in actuality, which Aristotle calls the *synolon*. Indeed, if matter exists only in relation to form, thus only to be actualized, substantial form (i.e. form in actuality) cannot exist without some matter on which to carry out its own

activity. Form is such only because there is something to form. The indissoluble union in actuality which comes about from the two principles in question (form and matter) is possible, however, in virtue of a specific feature of theirs, namely, what Eckhart calls *nuditas* ("nakedness"). Form and matter must be naked (i.e. indeterminate) in order to become one. Around the term *nuditas* and the adjective *nudus*, Eckhart constructs an extraordinary exegesis of the biblical text that unites the Holy Scriptures, Aristotle, and Avicenna, showing concretely the congruence between the reasons of the philosophers and the holy text.

The unity Eckhart speaks of is a substantial and necessary unity, not a simple *unitum* made up of the sum of various parts. Form and matter are not parts of an entity, but are its essential principles, which constitute it as a substantial unity. In order for this to be possible, it is necessary for the active to be purely active and the passive purely passive. Thus the union, or rather, the actualization, is complete and substantial. Eckhart lists a number of cases of this substantial unity, all taken from Aristotle's *De anima*. Indeed, one of the cases in which this *unum actu* is particularly obvious is the Aristotelian psychological doctrine.⁴⁴ In the *De anima* Aristotle had already affirmed that the sense of sight had to be "naked" and free from all color in order to see all the colors, and in this way the intellect had to be naked (i.e. bare, indeterminate from all intelligibles) in order to know each intelligible. This nudity, which Aristotle and Anaxagoras spoke of, is the same nudity of which the Bible speaks, where we read, concerning Adam and Eve: *erat uterque nudus, Adam scilicet et uxor eius* (Gen. 2:25). Adam and Eve are *parabolice* indications of form and matter both of which must be naked, that is, indeterminate.

From this, we can see clearly how being naked (i.e. indeterminate) is a property both of form and of matter and is the indispensable condition of their union. This is very important for here we can finally understand how the Eckhartian conception of the intellect is completely different from the possible intellect of Aristotle.⁴⁵ Active and passive are simply the univocal principles of one and the same relation. Eckhart claims, in effect, that form and matter are two principles of things, but they are *unum in esse* and have *unum operari*. In other words, they are two potential principles which constitute a unity in actuality and in potentiality. Thus, the sense of sight and the object of vision, the intellect and the object of the intellect

⁴⁴ J. Casteigt, *Connaissance et vérité chez Meister Eckhart* (Paris: 2006).

⁴⁵ A. Beccarisi, "Der hoechste under den meistern," 25–26.

are two principles potentially separated, yet one single real unity in actuality. To see and to be seen is an activity that occurs simultaneously. It is indeed one and the same act, which only logically can be decomposed in an instance of total activity and an instance of total passivity.

CUES, VERSION C-T:

EXODUS, *COMMENTARY ON ST JOHN'S GOSPEL*, SERMONS

The Commentary on Exodus

Of the 40 pericopes of the book of Exodus, Eckhart discusses only 14, often considering only a single verse, as in the cases of the verses 1–2, 22, 23, 31, and 32. For verses 35 to 40, Eckhart explicitly refers the reader to the *Glosses* and to St Thomas, in particular *Summa theologiae* 1, 2, q.102.

As in the case of *Genesis I*, the *Commentary on Exodus* also has a number of versions: a mere outline in the Erfurt manuscript and a definitive version in the manuscript that belonged to Nicholas of Cusa. Already in the first version, which, as we have seen, is contemporary if not earlier than the first Parisian question, the ontological problem which Eckhart had already addressed in the *General Prologue* is present, namely, the thesis *Deus est esse*. The question is addressed in commenting on the famous answer God gives Moses: *Ego sum qui sum* which Eckhart decomposes in the following elements: *ego*, *qui*, *sum*, *ego sum*, and *sum qui sum* (nn. 14–25, LW II, 20, 31).

These elements express, according to Eckhart, the truth of divine essence. The first explanation is grammatical, consisting in the remark that the personal pronoun *ego*, the indefinite pronoun *qui*, and the substantive verb *sum* are properly suited to God and to Him alone. The pronoun *ego* signifies pure substance, without accidents or qualities, as it is fitting for God, who transcends all qualifications, be they accidental, specific, or generic. The indefinite pronoun *qui*, insofar as it is not finite (i.e. not determinate), is in perfect accord with divine immensity. Finally, the verb *esse* is proper to God, since God, as we are also told in the *incipit* of the prologue of St John's Gospel, is the Verb or Word.

Eckhart distinguishes *ego sum* from the rest of the proposition and notes that the verb *sum* is predicated as *secundum adjacens* (i.e. predicates existence and is not simply the copula in a predicative relation). Being can be predicated of God only *per identitatem*, for it is not a different thing from God. God is not the subject of being but being itself. Thus, *sum* means the essence proper to God. But saying that divine being is

the subject itself, God, comes down to saying that there is no difference between subject and predicate. Both are one and the same *sum*. God is thus pure being, naked being, being for itself. It could seem (and for a long time Eckhartian critics have thought so) that Eckhart is here in contradiction with what he claims in the first Parisian question, and also with what he writes in the *Commentary on Exodus* in a passage we shall examine below. The contradiction, however, is merely apparent, for the pure and naked being Eckhart is speaking of here is not in any way the being of the created beings, of which he speaks in other contexts.

The being of God has indeed a peculiarity, namely that of being eternally converging on itself: the reflexive conversion of being in itself and on itself and its fixation within itself. This conversion of being or the life of being in itself is thought out in terms recalling Proclus, or rather the *Liber de causis*. For indeed, according to the *Liber de causis*, only intellectual substances have the property to reflect on themselves. "*Ego sum qui sum*" thus indicates a particular kind of being which we could call intellectual. As Eckhart has said in the first Parisian question, only that which is immaterial has the property to reflect totally on itself, and it is in this conversion that all of its being resides. Eckhart, in order to explain this particular ontological type, uses, in the German works, the word *isticheit*, which signifies precisely this intellectual being of God eternally reflexive on Himself (is-ness). It is clear that here we are not speaking of the being proper to the fully created world, nor of the *esse subsistens* which Thomas had in mind. Rather, we are referring to an ontological state proper to the divine, expressed through the biblical formula "*ego sum qui sum*". In this way, there is no contradiction between what Eckhart claims in the first Parisian question and what is written in the *Commentary on Exodus*. There are two reasons for this: (1) the pericope which is analyzed and the first Parisian question can be dated most probably to the same period, and (2) both deal with exactly the same question seen from two different points of view, that of created beings and that of God. Being from the point of view of the created is always a more or less determinate being, a *hoc et hoc* as Eckhart says. It is clear that in this sense, in God, there cannot be the same kind of being, but rather an absence of being and contemporaneously an inclination towards the being of the created. From the point of view of God, the question is reversed: being is everything and totally in God, and in the created as separated from God, it is nothing. But the being which is God Himself, naturally, cannot be the same which is predicated of created beings, but must be infinite, indistinct, pure, simple, and in particular, must be completely reflexive on itself, a kind of divine self-knowing.

This apparently paradoxical relation of identity and difference with respect to created being is the subject theme of the commentary on the pericope: *Neque omnem similitudinem, quae est in caelo desuper et in terra deorsum* (Ex. 20:4; LW II n. 110–28). Eckhart focuses only on the word *similitudinem*, saying that there is no similarity which can be established between God and the created, because this would signify the cancellation of the possibility for a true similarity and thus the understanding of the true relation between Creator and created. In what sense therefore are God's being and created being contemporaneously similar and dissimilar? Eckhart's answer is: in God, things themselves or the ideas of the things (or forms) are not, but are rather the reasons (the principles) of the things and forms. Nothing is contemporaneously so similar and so dissimilar as the principle of a thing (*ratio rei*) from the thing itself. From this, says Eckhart, it appears obvious that the similar and the dissimilar are conjoined; the one cannot be without the other. In God, therefore, the thing itself cannot exist, and this is obvious, but there cannot even exist the ideal version of that thing or idea. For in God, there exists only the principle that enables a thing to exist: this principle is similar to the thing insofar as it is its foundation, its reason for existing. But, at the same time, it is also dissimilar, for it is different from the thing or its idea. This relation of identity and difference is further explained with an example: the concrete colored thing is such only in virtue of its color. In this sense, the concrete colored thing, for example the white wall, is in a certain sense similar to abstract color, insofar as it is a colored body, but at the same time, it is dissimilar from all that is not colored, for example the wall in the dark.

This example, according to Eckhart, shows a precise theory of knowledge, which he explains in this way: forms give things their name and their species. For example, a man has this name in virtue of his form. This form, which in the being is called *man*, is found only in the thing and not in God. In God there does not exist any determinate form such as man, animal, plant, and so on. In God, there are only the reasons of things and forms (i.e. their principles in a causal and virtual way). These are the principles through which God creates, but they are not ideas, because they are not forms. This difference between "form" and "ratio" of the form, or principle, enables Eckhart to explain in a rational way why God cannot be named. This is not a renunciation of the possibility of knowing God, but rather of the possibility of reaching further knowledge that does not require definitions and names, because it only intuites the principles. From this point of view, God and created being are utterly dissimilar: created being is named and defined by forms, God is neither named nor defined,

because he has no forms, but rather has unnameable and indefinable principles. This, however, does not signify that between God and created being there should be an insuperable abyss: for though forms and definitions of things are not in God, they derive from God, for, Eckhart says, the similar generates the similar. What does this mean? Eckhart uses three examples: the first is heat which is *formaliter* in fire, but *spiritualiter* and *virtualiter* in the sun; the second, the absence of color; and the third, the relation between Father and Son in the Trinity. Let us consider the example of color because it is often used by Eckhart, though, on the whole, it can seem not to be so clear. Let us take a colored wall. It is reasonable to say that the color is in itself on the wall, given that the latter is colored. In the eye which perceives the colored wall and especially in the intellect which presides over the vision of the color, it is found only in a certain sense. And it is easy to understand why: were the color to be in itself in the eye and in the intellect, man would only be able to see a determinate color and not another. For example, he could see red, but not green, as is the case for animals. However, something of the color must be both in the eye as in the intellect for man to be able to see and perceive colored things, otherwise man would not be able to recognize color. In the eye and in the intellect there must, therefore, be that which Eckhart calls, with Averroes, *intentio*, namely a predisposition to perceive color. This disposition is not, for sure, a color itself (it is dissimilar from color) but at the same time it is also similar to color, for otherwise it could not be possible for man to recognize and distinguish color from other sensations. We can say, therefore, that color is both in the wall and in the eye or intellect, but according to different modes: in the wall, it is in itself, or *formaliter*, in the eye, on the other hand, it is present as an *intentio* or *similitudo*. For this reason, the wall is colored, but does not see color, while the eye is not colored but can see color, precisely because it does not have any color in itself *formaliter*, as the wall does; it would then be an object among others and not the organ of sight, capable of seeing color. For this reason, in God there can be no form of a thing, but rather the general and indistinct intention towards all things. In the first Parisian question, which we saw earlier, Eckhart uses the same example of the absence of color in the eye to explain the lack of being in God. On the basis of what we are told in the *Commentary on Exodus*, it is clear why: for in God, there cannot be being per se, that is, the same being as in the created beings, which designates the concrete things. In God, there can only be the principle of being (the reason of being), an *intentio* to being.

The Commentary on St John's Gospel

As is the case with all of Eckhart's *expositiones* on the Scriptures, the *Commentary on St John's Gospel*, too, considers only some *auctoritates*. More than a third of the work concerns the first chapter. Of this, more than two-thirds refer to the prologue (Joh. 1:1–18), the rest concerns a few words from verses 38, 39, 43, 46, and 48. The sixth chapter is completely overlooked. Other chapters, such as chapters 18 and 19, which narrate the passion and death of Jesus, are very much summarized. Eckhart dwells mostly on the verse: *Quid est veritas?* (18:38), while not considering the passion of the Christ. Eckhart himself seems to motivate his choice in the proem of the commentary: he writes that Augustine in Book 7 of the *Confessions* says that he read a large part of the first chapter of the Gospel of St John in the books of certain Platonists. Again Augustine, in the *De civitate Dei*, quotes a certain Platonist who had stated that the first six verses of the first chapter of St John's Gospel should be read by everybody, going from *In principio erat Verbum* to *fuit homo missus a Deo*. It is thus relevant that it is precisely these lines which Eckhart explicitly refers to in the first chapter of his commentary (LW III, nn. 4–13), for it is these lines, interpreted in the right way, which “teach the natures and properties of things, both as far as their being is concerned and their way of operating, whilst we follow our faith, they teach us about the nature of things” (LW III, n. 13). This means that the first six verses contain, according to Eckhart, the axioms, rules, and foundations which are indispensable in order to interpret reality—axioms which the Dominican lists from one to 15 and which can be subdivided in the following manner: (1) In divine things, as in the natural and artificial ones, that which is produced or proceeds from something else is always precontained in that from which it comes to be and is thus produced. That is to say, the first foundation concerns that which, from Albert the Great onwards, is designated as “essential causation”, according to which the product is always present in a simpler way in its own cause and is not essentially different from its own cause, though it appears different. (2) From this first axiom, the second is derived, which we saw already in the *Lectio II super Eccli. 24*: that which proceeds or is produced exists (*preest*) already in its cause as the seed in its principle. It is to this philosophical truth that the evangelist refers when he declares: *in principio erat Verbum*. (3) That which is produced from something can be compared to the word which is pronounced, which says something and communicates something about whom it is who pronounces it. (4) From this, the following comes about: that what proceeds (*procedens*) is in the

producing principle as a *ratio* and *similitudo*, that is to say in a more simple and indeterminate form. These first four axioms are concerned with the identity between the principle and principled. The other axioms, in contrast, deal with the difference between principle and principled and can be summarized in the following way: (1) That which proceeds from something else is distinct from it. That is, the fact of proceeding from something is the grounding which establishes at the same time the identity, analyzed previously, and the difference. It is to this that the words *verbum erat apud deum* refer. This, according to Eckhart, denotes a certain equality between similar beings. (2) From this relation of equality and difference, it necessarily follows that the product, the principled, can be called the son of the producing being, insofar as he is of the same essence, but with his own existence. (3) Hence, it follows that the Son, or the Word, is equal to the Father.

At this point, Eckhart duly introduces a distinction: if that which he has said up until now concerns, on his own explicit affirmation, both the relation between Father and Son in the Trinity (*in divinis*) as well as the relation between principle and principled, cause and effect, in nature and in art (*in naturis et artificialibus*), it is only in the Trinity that this relation of perfect equality comes about, of which the verse *verbum erat apud deum* speaks. The preposition *apud*, "by", is only said of the Son in the Trinity, while created beings are not *apud*, but *sub* (i.e. inferior to the Creator). The created beings, in this way, have a different nature compared to God, being different from Him. However, continues Eckhart, insofar as they are present in God as principle (*ratio* and *similitudo*, which he has spoken of also in the *Commentary on Exodus* examined above), the nature of things dissolves into the nature of God and there remains only God. An example that Eckhart found in Avicenna clarifies this apparent paradox: the model of a boat in the mind of the designer is not a concrete boat, but it is the mind itself which is projecting it. Therefore, the model outlined above of the procession of divine persons is valid also for natural and artificial productions, bearing in mind a fundamental difference: namely, that in the Trinity the three persons are *contemporaneously distinct as persons, but are of identical nature*, whereas in natural and artificial products, in contrast, identity *excludes* difference. Thus, things as such (i.e. distinct from their principle) have a different nature from their cause, but insofar as they are a *ratio* contained within the principle, they are the same and identical principle. (4) It follows, therefore, that the concrete object which has its own independent existence from its designer exists, however, also in the mind of the designer who has designed it. (5) Having thus clarified the

difference between the relation there is between the persons of the Trinity and the relation between natural and artificial objects, Eckhart focuses his analysis on the activity itself, which is common to all beings, be they divine, natural, or artificial. This activity or force, whether it is a *processio* (*divinis*), *productio* (*artificialibus*), or *emanatio* (*naturis*) can also be called generation; a generation which is not biologic, which comes about in space and time, and which is the passing from not-being to being. Rather, the generation Eckhart speaks of is an eternal and continuous generation, as the nonfinite verb *erat* indicates in the sentence *in principio erat verbum*.

(6) At this point, it becomes evident how the relation of generation in question is not established between determinate things and entities; rather, the relation of co-essentiality concerns only the level of simple and indeterminate being. This also has, naturally enough, consequences for the theory of knowledge. Indeed, Eckhart goes on to claim that it is the proper role of the intellect to comprehend the object not in itself (i.e. as a determinate being, different from itself), but in its principles, that is, according to those elements which the object has in the mind of its designer, as was already explained above. Here, though in a veiled form, Eckhart clearly affirms that, at a superior level of consciousness, there is no difference between the knowing subject and the known object. Rather, the subject (the designer) discovers in himself the reasons of the object that he wants to know. The expression *Verbum hoc erat in principio apud deum* refers directly to this reality.

(7) As a consequence, the designer produces the concrete object on the basis of certain principles which he already has in mind, without which he cannot produce anything, as the line *omnia per ipsum facta sunt et sine ipso factum est nihil*, indicates. (8) Naturally, the projecting of the concrete object in the mind of the designer is not the same object that comes to be produced, but it is the mind itself of the designer, and, thus, his own life, insofar as the model does not distinguish itself from its inventor. This is what the verse refers to: *quod factum est* (the product) *in ipso* (in the designer) *vita erat* (it is the same life as the designer). (9) The discussion to this point is mostly valid for human beings (hence, Eckhart's concern with a proper theory of knowledge, with a precise metaphysical foundation). For when the *verbum*, the Greek *logos*, is discussed, this is especially what is proper to rational beings, like man, defined by Boethius as a rational animal. For this reason, the *word*, understood as *logos*, is the light of human beings. (10) It is a kind of light which is not like corporeal light, but which is independent from external conditions, as St John testifies, saying *et lux in tenebris lucet*. In the created things themselves, as we have seen,

there is a rational element which makes them recognizable. This rational element is called quiddity by Aristotle, that is, that which makes a being be the thing it is and which enables it also to be defined. It is this rational element that man comes to know and of which he discovers in himself the principle.

(11) On the basis of the various points discussed until now, we can conclude that the *verbum* or the *ratio rei*, the reason of things, is at the same time internal and external to things. Internal because it represents the distinctive element of the thing itself, that which makes it be what it is. External because the *ratio* does not derive from the thing, but from the intellect which knows it and which has already in itself, as Eckhart has shown, the seed, the principle of the thing.

The argumentative process set out by Eckhart, which constitutes the basis for the whole discussion in the *Commentary on St John's Gospel*, is rigorously philosophical. Eckhart does not want to demonstrate the Trinity rationally. The Trinitarian relations, in effect, constitute one of the cases or examples of essential causality. The others are the relation between knowing subject and known object, and the relation between God and created beings. From the point of view of essential causality, these three cases manifest the same characteristics: co-essentiality, eternity, and intellectuality. It is clear that, from this point of view, the created being as such (i.e. as a being determinate and separated from its principle), is a pure nothing, for all of its being, its *ratio* is the same as the principle which has produced it, just as the concrete boat is nothing in comparison with the model that exists eternally and intellectually in the mind of its designer. This indifference which Eckhart demonstrates with regards to the created is evident also in the relation between a general term (justice) and a particular term (just), which the Dominican subsequently speaks of precisely in order to clarify the 15 points he examines. The just, or the just man, as a concrete entity, is nothing in himself as this individual. As just this individual, he has no value, no sense. If, on the other hand, he is taken on the basis of an ontic relation with justice itself from which he derives, then the just man is justice itself.

The relation between principle and word, and between justice and just, constitutes, however, the necessary premise for the true question, namely that of the image which follows immediately the passages just commented on (nn. 23–27). In the case of the image of God, the *imago dei*, all the elements considered until now by Eckhart are appealed to, namely: co-essentiality of the principle and the principled, for indeed the image does not receive anything from the substrate in which it finds itself,

but rather takes everything from the principle from which it derives, just as the image in a mirror, which does not receive anything from its substrate (i.e. the mirror) but everything from its principle (i.e. the man who is mirrored). It is eternity, because image and exemplar are tied together by a reciprocal relation that makes them both exist simultaneously. The relation between image and exemplar does not come about in time, but is beyond time. There is finally also intellectuality, because image and exemplar know each other reciprocally, and by knowing each other, they discover that they are identical.

The Latin Sermons

The Cusa codex also contains a collection of sermons *De tempore* which go from Saturday *Quatuor temporum Pentecostes* to the 13th Sunday after the celebration of the Trinity. This is an extraordinary document which enables us to look into Eckhart's preacher's laboratory,⁴⁶ for we find in it different material of varying degree of completion with different themes and styles. It is difficult to say, with the actual state of research, whether this group of sermons is a draft of the *Opus sermonum* that Eckhart speaks of in the *Prologus generalis*, or whether they are a series of Latin sermons which Nicholas of Cusa, in some way, managed to get hold of, inserting them in the manuscript in order to present a complete and ultimate editorial version of Eckhart's projected edition.

It is certain, however, that we are not dealing with a group of sermons written out in a definitive manner. Many of the sermons are, indeed, mere sketches or references to certain themes.

MEMORANDUM OF DEFENSE

This document, preserved only in the Soest manuscript, was considered until ten years ago to be a chaotic and disordered grouping of a trial case set up against Eckhart.

Recently, however, Loris Sturlese⁴⁷ has demonstrated that this is not material for a trial put together as best as possible, but a proper treatise of defense, which Eckhart thought out and put into circulation. From this

⁴⁶ J. Koch, Einführung, in LW IV, XIII–XXVIII.

⁴⁷ L. Sturlese, "Eckhart, l'Inquisizione di Colonia e la memoria difensiva conservata nel codice di Soest 33," *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* 80 (2001), 62–89.

point of view, the Soest document has been revealed to be an extraordinary testimony of the philosophical thought of the Dominican Master in the last days of his life. Not only does Eckhart take a strong position defending the various points under accusation, but reverses the charge of heresy on to his own inquisitors, accusing them of not understanding the Sacred Scriptures.

In this sense, the *prenotandum* and the *notandum* with which the Soest document begins and ends is of particular interest for the historian of philosophy. These are two texts that can be considered as a sort of *Summa* of Eckhartian thought. Let us look in detail at the Soest document and in particular at these two texts.

The Soest document is composed of three parts: a first scroll contains a list of 49 (48) claims judged to be erroneous, which include articles taken from the Latin works (*Gen. II, Prologues, Gen. I, Exodus*) and works in the vernacular (*Liber Benedictus*, a treatise entitled *Requisitus*, in which Eckhart had answered certain observations which had been made to him on the *Liber Benedictus*, and in particular, sermons in vernacular); a second scroll contains the record of Eckhart's defense, constituted by a general prologue in which the Dominican declares the philosophical presuppositions of his doctrine and the answers to the incriminated articles listed in the first scroll; the document ends with a third scroll which contains articles taken exclusively from sermons in vernacular. The particularity of this third scroll is that, here, each contested proposition is immediately followed by an answer. The propositions are, therefore, not recalled entirely as in the second scroll, but can be inferred from Eckhart's answers. The Soest document is of extraordinary importance because it represents a sort of spiritual testament of Meister Eckhart. In particular, in the record of the defense, in the second scroll, which introduces the answers to the incriminated articles, Eckhart gives a small but substantial essay of his own philosophy.

First of all, he appeals to the experience of two illustrious Dominicans venerated by the order, namely, Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas, whose doctrines were judged erroneous and doubtful. In particular, Thomas Aquinas, says Eckhart, was criticized during his lifetime, but subsequently, his doctrines were approved by the university as well as by the Roman Curia. He then chooses two different strategies to deal with the incriminated theses: he acknowledges and defends unconditionally his written works (both the *Liber benedictus* and the *Opus tripartitum*) and he wonders that other claims have not been contested. He declares himself ready, however, to revise certain positions put forward in sermons in

the vernacular that have been attributed to him (*qui mihi ascribuntur*).⁴⁸ He ends by affirming very clearly that in the things he has written or said, he may have made mistakes, but had no intention of falling into heresy. For there to be heresy, the mistake must be intentional and made on purpose.⁴⁹

There follow three *notanda* which are crucial in order to fully understand his doctrine and to get a correct perspective on the incriminating claims.

1. The expression “inasmuch” (*in quantum*) indicates a connection between two terms (*reduplicatio*) which excludes all that is not comprised within this relation. This is a well-known logical figure that Eckhart uses to ground the relation of identity and difference between God and the created. The *in quantum* distinguishes that which is ontologically one and simple through the differences between their modes of manifesting themselves. The example Eckhart gives is the following: though in God, to be and to understand are the same thing, we say that God understands evil, but is not evil. That is to say, the infinite simplicity of God is determined by his manifestations (acts), which are distinguished from others *in quantum* ways of divinity. In the same way, though in God essence and paternity coincide, he nevertheless generates *in quantum* a Father, and not *in quantum* an essence. This is clearly more than a hermeneutical key word, as was claimed by Ruh.⁵⁰ For the *in quantum* indicates a logical and metaphysical link between two equal terms, set up in a relation to each other. Generation, for example, cannot be correlative of essence, but rather of paternity, just as evil (which is a non-being) can only be understood by God in *quantum intelligere*, but not *in quantum esse*. In the same way, in things, they can be put in relation with God, only *in quantum* as they manifest modes, signs of divine perfection (wisdom, justice, goodness, etc.).
2. From this is derived the fundamental law of analogy which Eckhart had considered in *Lesson II on Ecclesiasticus*, Ch. 24 and in the *Commentary on Exodus*: the good and goodness constitute a unity, because the good, insofar as it is good (*reduplicatio*), is nothing other than the concrete term of its abstract correlate. The good, as the just or the true,

⁴⁸ Eckhart, *Memorandum*, n. 71, LW V, 276, 19.

⁴⁹ W. Trusen, *Der Prozeß gegen Meister Eckhart*, 97.

⁵⁰ K. Ruh, *Meister Eckhart*, 86.

are nothing other than the ways (we could also say the declensions) of a unique general term. For this, it is possible to see things from a double perspective: first, as things of nature, determined by space and time, the created beings. In this case, there will be a relation of analogy between them and God. Or, second, it is possible to see them as determinations, modes of divine perfection, and thus, insofar as they are good, just, true, and so on. In this case, the relation will be univocal.

3. Taking up a claim we have seen in the prologue of St John's Gospel, Eckhart claims that the generator or agent does not cease to act until it has impressed all of its form in the generated. In addition, the relation between generator and generated is such that both are "*unum in re*", but different in virtue of the relation which binds them. The Father and the Son, though they are of the same substance, are, however, really different in virtue of the relation which binds them.

CONCLUSION

It is clear from this review that the starting point for an understanding of Eckhart's general philosophical and theological teaching can now be based on texts that have been reliably edited. What now is needed in the research are more critical editions and studies of Eckhart's contemporaries and readers. Eckhart primarily was a preacher, a member of the Order of Preachers. Hence, it ought not surprise one that his *expositions* on significant books of Scripture form the largest part of the extant Latin texts. When combined with the *Collatio on the Sentences* and the *Parisian Questions*, one can get a good sense of Eckhart's philosophical and theological hermeneutics. Above all, these texts allow us to see the profound and very deep uses of the major philosophers, Greek, Latin, Arabic, Jewish, and Christian in his meditations on the texts of Scripture.

The fate of Eckhart's German texts, as will be seen in Chapter Four, is very different from that of the Latin texts. The German texts with some exceptions do not exist as a tight-knit commentary tradition. The treatises and sermons in German have had to be carefully reconstructed from various witnesses in some 300 manuscripts. Nevertheless, scholars can now study and compare Eckhart's teaching in both the Latin and German versions, and they can overcome traditional readings that ignored the continuity of Eckhartian ideas in the two languages in which he wrote.

ECKHART AS PREACHER, ADMINISTRATOR, AND MASTER OF THE
SENTENCES. FROM ERFURT TO PARIS AND BACK: 1294–1313.
THE ORIGINS OF THE *OPUS TRIPARTITUM*

Loris Sturlese

On 18 April 1294, on Easter day, a young academic rose to preach in the Church of Saint-Jacques in Paris. The solemn sermon which he pronounced on that occasion was noted down by a member of the public, and a few years later a finished copy of the text was deposited in the library of the convent of Kremsmünster in Germany, where it is still preserved today. A marginal note in the codex reveals the name of the Dominican who had been given such an honorable status: he was “Brother Eckhart, lecturer on the Sentences.” This document, which has survived by chance, is the first witness in documentary history to the one who was to become famous by being named “Meister Eckhart.”

The Easter sermon of 1294 is significant for a reconstruction of Eckhart’s life, for it enables us to make a series of biographical deductions. He is designated as “Lecturer on the Sentences” and we know that Peter Lombard’s *Sentences* were commented on by the bachelors of the Faculty of Theology. Given that the Parisian statutes prescribe for this office the minimum age of 33, we can conclude that Eckhart was born before 1260. His family belonged to lower nobility, coming from Hochheim, and had moved close by, to Tambach, near Gotha, in Thuringia. Eckhart must have entered the Dominican order when he was at least 18 years of age, having already mastered Latin and with a basic culture whose breadth is indefinable. During his studies in Germany and in Paris, Eckhart must have successfully gone through the typical academic career of a Dominican student: three years of study of the “*artes liberales*,” two years of natural philosophy (centered around Aristotelian science), and three years of theology in a *Studium particulare*. We do not know where and with whom he studied. He may have known Albert the Great in Cologne. Albert died in 1280. The influence of Albert—who was then the greatest scholar and cultural organizer of the German Dominican province—on the initial education of Eckhart was, in any case, decisive. In the sermon, Eckhart attributes to the philosophers a rather important role, following explicitly Albert’s program which consisted of integrating the science of antiquity

and of the Arabs into Christian thought. Eckhart even appeals explicitly to the authority of Albert in a central passage of his sermon: "Albertus saepe dicebat . . ." With these words, the young bachelor proudly proclaimed the school to which he belonged.

The first document concerning Eckhart refers us to the most important cultural center of the medieval West (i.e. Paris), revealing a particularly significant aspect of the life of a Dominican intellectual, namely the characteristic mobility, also at an international level, which is utterly different from the *stabilitas loci* of the monastic intellectual belonging to the Benedictine order. We shall return further down to the doctrinal movements and the professors of the University of Paris in Eckhart's time. But first, a Dominican priest had a local point of reference, namely the convent, which he had entered and of which he was a "son." Eckhart belonged to the convent of Erfurt.

Erfurt was in Eckhart's time one of the most important cities in Germany. It was situated at the crossroads of three commercial routes of first-rate importance; a bishopric, endowed with schools, monasteries, and libraries, it also hosted a Jewish community of considerable dimensions. The Dominicans founded a convent very early on. In 1229 construction was initiated by a member of the local aristocracy, and from there the Dominicans began their work of "colonizing" East Germany. In the 13th and 14th centuries, the importance of this convent remained central. This is confirmed by the fact that, as we shall see below, when the territories of northeast Germany were severed from the German province in order to create a new province ("Saxony"), the central seat of this new province was Erfurt. Eckhart thus grew up in a circle which, though situated at the outskirts with respect to the famous French or Italian universities and the papal curia, had a cultural dimension of a certain importance, however difficult it is for us to understand. But, especially, from the point of view of politics and religions, his convent was a strong and active propulsive center of cultural activity.

It is to his convent in Erfurt that Eckhart, on completion of his studies at Paris, returned, for we know with certainty that, between 1294 and 1298, he was elected prior of the convent in Erfurt. It is an election that indicates, most certainly, the man's charisma, but which has nothing surprising about it, for in the Dominican order, the principle of alternation of the cultural and administrative roles was common practice. On his return from his Parisian experience, it was almost inevitable that the convent acknowledged a member who had had such a prestigious appointment with his election to the office of prior. Eckhart, however, was not only a

prior: he also combined this role with another, namely, that of vicar of the provincial prior for the province of Thuringia. The two qualifications are testified in the introduction of the "Talks" (*Reden*), "which brother Eckhart of the Order of Preachers, Vicar of Thuringia, prior of Erfurt, held with the disciples who asked about many points of discussion when they sat together to eat."¹ Given that he was allowed to keep a double position only until 1298, after which the two were declared to be incompatible, this text constitutes a precious chronological indication for the composition of the work (i.e. before 1298). This is the first work written and published by Eckhart in the vernacular. It also contains another important piece of information relative to the cultural collocation of Eckhart in his province. In the period 1293–96, Dietrich of Freiberg was the provincial prior of Dominican Teutonia. He is the most important and discussed figure on the German cultural scene at the end of the 13th century. To find Eckhart as Dietrich's vicar, and therefore as a person who is in his confidence, suggests a relation that has consequences of a political and cultural nature which deserve to be examined more closely.

In order to do so, it is necessary to clarify certain points of detail concerning the organization of the Dominican order. It is well known that the mendicant orders, and in particular the Dominicans, directed their evangelizing actions on urban centers, paying attention to new social and cultural phenomena which led, for example, to delimiting the boundaries of their provinces, not by following the traditional limits of the ancient dioceses but rather the new regional linguistic divisions. Culture, moreover, was granted particular attention, as a series of structural norms demonstrate, such as the existence of a lecturer as a condition for the existence of a convent, or the requirement to use the convent's income to set up a library, or the very fact that admission to the order was made on condition of the literacy of the novice (which meant his knowing Latin). But, beyond these more general and well-known norms, a series of dispositions were undertaken which concerned the organization of the study within the order. The continuous education of the brethren was taken care of by the lecturer of the convent. In addition, in each province, a school (*studia*) was set up, to which the most promising among the brethren were sent to study the "arts" (*artes*), natural philosophy, and then theology.

¹ Eckhart, *Reden*, DW V, 185: "Daz sint die rede, die der vicarius von turingen, der prior von erfurt, bruoder eckhart predigerordens mit solchen kindern hâte, diu in dirre rede vrâgeten vil dinges, dô sie sâzen in collationibus mit einander."

In almost all the provinces, what is more, there were “universities of the order” (*studia generalia*) in which choice students could reach academic levels of international distinction. The universities of the order not only received students from the province of origin but also students from other provinces. Such a complex and costly organization (which implied a continuous movement of brethren from one province to another as well as their maintenance while abroad) had a clear and precise aim. From a cultural point of view, it is evident that this organization was busy forming an elite of theologians capable of formulating a homogenous theology throughout Europe. There are strong signals that, from the 1280s onwards, those responsible for the order were intent on promoting the theology of Thomas Aquinas so as to achieve a common theology. Eckhart and Dietrich were regarded, within this complex but highly functional system, as two main representatives of the German province (Teutonia), and, indeed, they were the only German Dominicans to hold Parisian chairs.

But there is also another element that characterizes this world and which comes out clearly in Eckhart’s biography: namely, the integrating of intellectuals in the governing part of the order, and thus their double position of absolute prestige in an organization which constitutes the first context of their activity, but also a powerful instrument for the dissemination of their ideas.

Thus, to measure the importance of the relation between Eckhart and Dietrich we should not only “imagine their vivacious discussions”² but also consider that, objectively, at the end of the 1290s, the two of them are the only dominant figures of the cultural elite and government of the German provinces. We can thus rightly wonder whether they had a common project or not, and if they did, what the guiding lines of such a program were.

In 1302, Eckhart was again in Paris, this time as professor (“*magister actu regens*”) of theology, called to the chair reserved for the “foreign” Dominicans, that is, those not belonging to the French province. Dietrich had just terminated his teaching there a few years earlier, and calling Eckhart to Paris must certainly represent an important acknowledgement of the cultural worth of the German province, which, from being a marginal constituent (after Albert, in 1277, only Ulrich of Strasbourg went to Paris), starts to contribute to the elite of the professors of the order. Again the

² J. Koch, “Kritische Studien zum Leben Meister Eckharts,” in Koch, *Kleine Schriften*, 1 (Storia e Letteratura. Raccolta di Studi e Testi) 127 (Rome: 1973), 247–347.

same problem arises: did Eckhart arrive in Paris with a particular agenda? Was this eventual program made in continuity or discontinuity from that of Dietrich?

The sources do not permit us to give a definite answer. In Paris, Eckhart, as any professor of theology, had three main tasks: to give lessons on the Scriptures, discuss and determine "*quaestiones*" (both those formulated by himself and those proposed by his students), and preach. However, of all this activity, undertaken for at least a whole academic year, if not more, there are scarcely but a few traces left. Some questions have survived in the notebooks of the audience, and perhaps the commentaries, or a part of them, can serve as supporting documents for the lessons, which are grouped together in the *Opus tripartitum*; as for the sermons, we only have the text of a sermon held on the occasion of the celebration for St Augustine.

For the analysis of the Parisian material, as of the rest of his works, see Beccarisi, Chapter Two above. Here, it will be more to the point to observe a surprising element: namely, the substantial failure of Eckhart's Parisian teaching. Libraries are overflowing with medieval commentaries on the *Sentences* and of collections of questions discussed, and *Quodlibet* lectures, mostly of little originality and interest, though written with care, copied, and reproduced and preserved till today. And yet, of Eckhart's activity in Paris, there remain but a few fragments. Why? True enough, this could depend on his own subjective and perhaps chance decision in not writing out and publishing his lessons. However, it would seem more plausible to think that the philosophical and theological agenda with which he had come to Paris, the claims he made there, the positions he took, did not find a receptive audience in the university. Moreover, neither do we have documents testifying of the two-years' activity of Dietrich of Freiberg in Paris, which leads us to suppose a common failure. A common failure which, it should be noted, is contrasted by a common success in Germany.

In effect, when reading the *Parisian Questions* and the few testimonies which Eckhart himself has left us on his teaching, one gets the impression that Eckhart was, on the one hand, fully in line with the Dominican school, defending the thesis of the primacy of the intellect over the will against the opposing Franciscan. He thus formulated a position on which the order presumably agreed. Two indications tend to go in this direction, namely, the documentation provided by his opponent Gonsalvus in his version of the question on the "praise of God in the future life and love of God in the present life" (see above), as well as an ironic reference to

the same discussion in the German Sermon Q 70: "The finest masters say that the kernel of salvation lies in understanding. A prominent theologian recently came to Paris and opposed this with loud fulminations. Then another master spoke up better than all those of Paris who held to the better doctrine: 'Master, you cry out and fulminate very positively. If it were not God's word in the holy gospel, you would be making a great fuss...'"

The theme Eckhart refers to here is certainly perceived, by his audience, as a doctrine which strongly identifies his order, and this perception is summarized by the title of the famous collection of German sermons: "*Paradisus anime intelligentis*," in which there is a marked insistence on the difference between Dominicans and Franciscans on this point. However, on the other hand, when Eckhart comes to determine more precisely the intellectualist option, the distance he takes from Thomas is obvious (declared by Eckhart at the beginning of the question: "Utrum in Deo sit idem esse et intelligere?"), as well as the distance from the contemporary Thomism as it is configured in the writings of Hervaeus Natalis, for example, bachelor from the same faculty and in the same years in which Eckhart was teaching. In short, the "third way" which Eckhart works on and presents in Paris does not seem to have convinced anyone.

If Sermon 70 gives us a sympathetic portrait of the vehemence of *Gonsalvus* (a rather different portrait from the one transmitted by the Franciscan tradition which, in the case of the Spanish master, reaches almost hagiographical levels), another three sermons, Quint 14, 15, and 24, provide us with a concordant documentation regarding what seems to have been, according to Eckhart, the fundamental contents of his teaching in Paris: "In the 'humble man' is accomplished all that the Scriptures have said about Jesus:"³ "I said in the schools of Paris that all thing shall be accomplished in the truly humble man."

The perfect man who has arrived at the awareness of himself and of the world and which, in the Latin works—in particular the *Commentary on St John's Gospel*—is presented as "divine man" (*homo divinus*) appears in these texts with a peculiar coherence in the figure of the "humble man." Again, some considerations about the doctrines in circulation in the University of Paris can help us to conjecture the sense, or in any case the value, of his contribution. For it is precisely in Paris, 30 years earlier, that the Averroist current had put forward the exact opposite of the figure of

³ Eckhart, Sermon 14, DW I, 235, 4–5; Sermon 24, DW I, 421, 1–422, 3; Sermon 15, DW I, 247, 5–6.

the “humble man,” namely that of the magnanimous man (*magnanimitas*). The study and the enthusiastic deepening of the knowledge of Aristotle’s *Nichomachean Ethics*, with its system of Greek values centered on the virtue of magnanimity, received interpretations that brought Bishop Etienne Tempier, in 1277, to publish a decree condemning this Aristotelian virtue. Later, in Eckhart’s time, the doctrine of magnanimity was still a topic of interpretation by the professors of the arts in Paris. I do not think that Eckhart, in placing retrospectively his own professorial activity in theology in Paris under the sign of evangelical *humilitas*, intended to take up a specific position in favor of the bishop’s condemnation. But, certainly, he intended to distance himself from the ethical doctrines of Averroist origin, which most probably were still circulating in Paris in the Faculty of Arts.

What is more, the theme of the “humble man” is strongly present from his earliest and most demanding work, the “Talks,” in the shape of the “obedient man.” Here, Eckhart presents his characteristic doctrine of “metaphysical necessity” from the superiority of God in man who is devoid of his own personal determination:⁴ “Where the man in obedience goes out of his own . . . there must God necessarily come back.” One ought to note the stress on “necessarily, *von nôt*.” It is plausible that this doctrine, to which Eckhart will stay faithful, defending it to the very end, even during his trial in 1326, was born precisely in the years of Parisian studies, in opposing the ethical Averroism of the masters of arts. But this position is framed within a broader project (i.e. a teaching which was qualified as alternative even to the views of Thomas and the Thomists, as well as to Franciscan theology). Eckhart, in 1303, brought forward an utterly original suggestion, which probably had at its center a new theology (*deus est intelligere*), a new anthropology (*intelligere est increabile*), and new ethics (the humility of the *homo divinus*). This was not a simple operation. Indeed, it was rather an enterprise which went against the, by now, consolidated positions of scholastic tradition. This is shown by the fact that the central thesis recalled in the three sermons we referred to ended up directly in the papal bull of condemnation, under suspicion of heresy:⁵ “all that the Holy Scripture says about Christ, it comes completely true about the good and divine man.” It makes a certain impression that this kind of teaching,

⁴ Eckhart, *Reden*, DW V, 187, 1–3: “Swâ der mensche in gehôrsame des sînen ûzgât und sich des sînen erwiget, dâ an dem selben muoz got von nôt wider îngân.”

⁵ John XXII, *Bulla in agro dominico*, art. 12, ed. Sturlese, LW V, 598.

promulgated from one of the most important chairs in Europe, did not leave any significant trace among the contemporary masters.

In 1303, on his return to Germany from the "*civitas philosophorum*," Eckhart was elected prior of the new Dominican province of Saxony, which had just been established through the separation of the convents of northeast Germany from the province of Teutonia. This latter province had constructed too many convents to be controlled properly by one unique governing body. Eckhart remained in his function for seven years. At the end of his mandate he was immediately elected prior of the other German province (Teutonia). But he could not take on the new appointment because the general chapter of the Dominicans blocked the election, urging him to go back to Paris to teach once again, for two academic years, 1311–13. In this period, the paths of Eckhart and Dietrich often cross again. In the Pentecost of 1304, they are both in Toulouse, delegates of the general chapter, Eckhart on behalf of the province of Saxony, Dietrich on behalf of the province of Teutonia. In 1310, after the annulment of Eckhart's election, it is Dietrich who takes on the regency of the province in order to organize a new election. The two, in these years, still remain the most prestigious cultural and political figures in Germany.

The election to provincial founder of Saxony, a regency of seven years and the immediate election, at its termination, to the twin province, are signs of a prestige which must have been based on more than Eckhart's intellectual and professorial stature. Nor was it based on the testified charisma of the preacher (Eckhart always gave a considerable amount of care in the writing and dissemination of his sermons, especially those in the vernacular). It was also based on his high quality as a leader and on his administrative capacities. He had been vicar of Thuringia, and prior of one of the most ancient and large convents of Germany, namely Erfurt. He was now administering a group of over 50 convents, spreading over an immense geographical perimeter. This function required him to deal with princes, cardinals, bishops, and civic governments for the defense of the privileges of the order, its sustenance, and its dissemination. This observation should lead us, on the one hand, to review the image of a too often stylized figure of Eckhart as a "mystic" out of touch with reality. On the other hand, these elements may induce us to suspect that, in this context, a political, cultural, and religious operation of very broad scope was taking place, whose actual dimensions are yet to be discovered.

In order to clarify the sense of this operation, we must look, for example, to that most precious of documents which is the *Sermones et lectiones super Ecclesiasticum*, Ch. 24. Two solemn sermons and two *Lessons* whose

theme is the liturgy of 8 September (Nativity of the Virgin) and which Eckhart held—as the date shows and is confirmed by the subscription of the last discourse—on the occasion of two provincial chapters at which he himself presided. The first occurred shortly after his return from Paris. The sermons were held in front of delegates of all the Dominican convents of Germany, an extremely qualified audience, composed of intellectuals ready to grasp the cultural messages given by the professor newly returned from Paris. Having preached the sermons, Eckhart collects them and publishes them, inserting them within the *Opus expositionum*, giving them a marked emphasis: for indeed, instead of placing them inside the collection of Latin sermons (which he had most probably already begun to edit), he places them next to his biblical commentaries, though they do not belong in any way to this literary genre. The significance of this placement is therefore noteworthy, and is confirmed by the programmatic contents of the sermons.

They contain, in effect, a form of *summa* of the philosophical theorems of Eckhart. For the specific analysis of the work, see Chapter Two. Here, we shall underline, in general, how these sermons give evidence for continuity with the *Parisian Questions* (for instance, the doctrine of the intellect) and how the relation between Creator and created is determined in new terms within a doctrine of general perfections which, despite appearances, does not modify the position sustained in Paris but merely reformulates it.

Both in *Question I* and the *Lesson II*, Eckhart writes that, when the general perfections (i.e. predicates such as “being,” “unity,” “truth,” “goodness,” “wisdom,” “justice,” etc.) are said of God and the created beings, this must be understood in an analogical sense. This means that the predicate in question belongs, according to the essential contents (“*formaliter*”), only to one of the members of the analogy. In *Question I*, Eckhart deduced from this that, given that created beings are essentially beings, God according to his essence, is a non-being: therefore, God is pure thought, intellect. In *Lesson II*, the same situation is presented in a reversed form: the general perfections can be predicated essentially only of God, and thus do not belong to the created beings “*formaliter*,” but only insofar as they are directly “irradiated” by God. An individual created being, as such, possesses no being, nor any perfection in itself apart from or totally separate from God. If it did, it would be a *nothing*. The only way it *is*, is in virtue of an uninterrupted reception of “is-ness” (“*isticheit*”) from God. Eckhart repeatedly appeals here to the paradigm: “*iustus-iustitia*,” of which he will say in the German Sermon 6 *Iusti vivent in aeternum*: “Who understands

the doctrine of justice and the just, understands all that I say." The metaphor of receiving analogical perfections is, according to Eckhart, the light which remains until it is irradiated by the luminous source and disappears suddenly into nothing when the luminous source is extinguished.

The comparison between the two texts clearly shows that Eckhart considers the relation between God and the created from two different points of view, but, on both occasions, he intends to express the same idea. In the *Parisian Question*, he looks at things from the naturalistic point of view as beings created and formally determinate, caused in terms of efficient causality and rejects the idea that God, as essential cause of being, can be said "to be" in this finite sense. In *Lesson II*, things are no longer considered as factual, physical data (i.e. as products of creative and efficient causality by God), but rather as revealing different perfections (e.g. "*in quantum bona*"). The question, in this way, shifts on to its formal and metaphysical foundation. The answer is: this foundation is always, only, and immediately the corresponding perfection of God (e.g. the "*bonitas dei*"). The thing of nature is no longer considered as a thing of nature, but as something that shows a determinate perfection. As such, it is a sign, a "modus" of God. While a perfection is predicated of God and of a thing of nature in an analogous way, the perfection which is predicated of God and of the things *in quantum* perfect is predicated univocally, because it is a perfection of God Himself. Putting in parenthesis "being natural" in the consideration of general perfections ("*perfections generales*") does not constitute, as we can see, a logical abstraction, but the acknowledgement of the founding role which God plays, insofar as he is the quintessence of perfections, in relation to contingent being.

Recognizing the fundamental unity of Eckhart's view expressed in Paris in 1303–04 and in his *Sermons and Lessons on Ecclesiasticus* held over the following years, puts in new terms the much-discussed question of the relations of the *Parisian Questions* and the *Opus tripartitum*. For the *Sermons on Ecclesiasticus* belong to this last work and recent research rather suggests dating the *Opus tripartitum* even to Eckhart's first Parisian appointment. The *Opus tripartitum* as it has come down to us in the codex E (the Prologues, the two versions of the *Commentary on Genesis*, the *Commentary on Exodus*, and the *Commentary on Wisdom*) appears indeed to go back to the first years of the 14th century. It is difficult to say, however, to which period the *Liber Parabolarum Genesis* and the *Commentary on St John's Gospel* belong. These are most certainly later works. However, were there changes of perspectives to be individuated in Eckhart's line of thought, it is very probable that these should come to light in his moving

onto the (new) project of an *Exposition of the Parables of Natural Things* (*de parabolis rerum naturalium*), rather than in the years of his academic teaching.

Actually, the examination of the positions Eckhart publicly took in the first decade of the 14th century seems to indicate the main lines of a cultural and religious project undertaken by means of different instruments (university lessons, treatises and erudite commentaries in Latin, sermons written in Latin and in vernacular), in different places (in university, within and without the Dominican order), but they are characterized by a remarkable organic form and also acknowledged, in the German Dominican provinces, with remarkable favor and agreement. This project develops through a dialectic discussion with Thomism, Franciscan positions, and the Averroism of the masters of arts. It makes everything depend on the necessity to recognize, beyond and beneath the given data of common sense and everyday life, the privileged relation which binds man with God, inferring the moral and behavioral consequences of becoming aware of it. This is, in actual fact, the real leitmotiv of Eckhart's works which he will put forward also during his second Parisian appointment in the years 1311–13 and also in the subsequent sermons.

ECKHART'S GERMAN WORKS

Dagmar Gottschall

Although Eckhart employed two different registers with effortless ease—the Latin of scholars and his German mother tongue—and although he wrote his German texts at the same period as his Latin writings, the situation regarding the transmission and reception of Eckhart's German works is fundamentally different from that of his Latin works. This special situation of transmission generates a number of specific problems when an editor seeks to hand them on in an assured form to the coming generations and to interpret their meaning.

This essay begins by presenting the specific problems of the German works, and then discusses the editorial endeavors of the Stuttgart collected edition from its beginnings in the 1930s down to the present state of affairs in the 21st century. Finally, on the basis of the critical collected edition, Eckhart's German works—the *Discourses of Instruction*, the *Liber Benedictus* which consists of the *Book of Divine Consolation* and the sermon *On the Noble Man*, Eckhart's German sermons, and (with reservations) the treatise *Von Abgeschiedenheit* (*On Detachment*)—are presented in terms of their chronology, the history of their transmission, and their contents.

1. THE TEXTS OF THE GERMAN WORKS¹

Today, we know that there are around 310 manuscripts which contain parts of Eckhart's German œuvre,² but there is not one single manuscript

¹ The most recent comprehensive study of the transmission of Meister Eckhart's works is Georg Steer, "Die Schriften Meister Eckharts in den Handschriften des Mittelalters," in *Die Präsenz des Mittelalters in seinen Handschriften. Ergebnisse der Berliner Tagung in der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, 6.–8. April 2000*, ed. Hans-Jochen Schiewer and Karl Stackmann (Tübingen: 2002), 209–302; on the German works, 233–81.

² On the history of the discovery, see Steer, "Die Schriften Meister Eckharts," 210–12. The systematic collection of manuscripts of Eckhart began with the work of the first editor, Franz Pfeiffer. It was continued by Spamer and Pahncke, and was finally brought to a conclusion by the editors of the critical collected edition, Josef Quint and Georg Steer: see Franz Pfeiffer, *Deutsche Mystiker des 14. Jahrhunderts 2: Meister Eckhart* (Leipzig: 1857; repr. Aalen: 1962), viii–x; Adolf Spamer, "Zur Überlieferung der Pfeiffer'schen Eckarttexte," *Beiträge zur*

that exclusively transmits Eckhart's texts. The wide diffusion and fragmentation of the vernacular texts is an essential characteristic that is absent from the Latin transmission.³ This fragmentation of the textual material results in a far-reaching process leading to many anonymous texts, and this in turn leads to the main problem of the German works (i.e. the question of their authenticity).

"The authenticity of all the Latin works is assured . . . the situation with regard to the German works is different."⁴ In addition to attributions in the manuscripts and entries in the catalogues of medieval libraries, Eckhart's Latin œuvre is attested by the catalogue of ecclesiastical writers drawn up by Abbot Johannes Trithemius of Sponheim and by the bibliophile Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa;⁵ but the most important witnesses to his German œuvre are the records of the accusers at his trial, who constructed their list of charges primarily out of propositions from Eckhart's vernacular production (naturally, in a Latin translation). This gives us an excellent instrument for the identification of Eckhart's writings—but it is of course limited to heretical propositions; whatever did not sound heretical went unheeded. It is true that copyists attribute parts of the German œuvre to Eckhart, or that these are linked to his name in library catalogues, but in view of the high degree of fluctuation in the mass of manuscripts, scholars have been very skeptical about these ascriptions. Josef Quint was the first to recognize the function of the trial material.⁶ On the

Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur 34 (1909): 307–420; Max Pahncke, "Kleine Beiträge zur Eckhartphilologie," *34. Jahresbericht des Gymnasiums zu Neuhaldensleben* (1909): 1–23; Pahncke, *Eckhartstudien* (Neuhaldensleben: 1913); Josef Quint, *Die Überlieferung der deutschen Predigten Meister Eckharts* (Bonn: 1932); Quint, *Neue Handschriftenfunde zur Überlieferung der deutschen Werke Meister Eckharts und seiner Schule. Ein Reisebericht* (Stuttgart: 1940), and *Fundbericht der handschriftlichen Überlieferung der deutschen Werke Meister Eckharts und anderer Mystikertexte* (Stuttgart: 1969); and Steer, "Die Schriften Meister Eckharts," 21f. with a list of the manuscripts discovered since 1974.

³ The Latin works, which are transmitted in a total of only 14 manuscripts, display a much greater compactness, with four manuscripts which represent collections of almost the entire Latin œuvre (E, C, T, L, two of which are identical in content); see Loris Sturlese, "Meister Eckharts Weiterwirken. Versuch einer Bilanz," in Sturlese, *Homo divinus. Philosophische Projekte in Deutschland zwischen Meister Eckhart und Heinrich Seuse* (Stuttgart: 2007), 107–18, see 114–18.

⁴ Steer, "Die Schriften Meister Eckharts" (note 1 above), 237.

⁵ See Loris Sturlese, "Acta Echardiana," in *Meister Eckhart, Die lateinischen Werke* V, pars 6, ed. Josef Koch, Bernhard Geyer, and Loris Sturlese (Stuttgart: 2006), 612–17.

⁶ For two lists of propositions which Hermann of Summo and William of Nidecke compiled from writings by Eckhart between 1 August 1325 and 26 September 1326, in order to accuse him of heresy (List 1 contains 48 [49] propositions, List 2 59 propositions), and Eckhart's response to this accusation (the so-called *Responsio* or *Apologia*, that is his Defense), see the critical edition by Loris Sturlese, "Acta Echardiana. Secunda pars.

basis of the lists of incriminated propositions, he elaborated a detailed set of instruments in order to demonstrate the authenticity of a vernacular text, which meant first and foremost the authenticity of the vernacular sermons. The decisive criterion for the authenticity of a vernacular Eckhart text is its mention in the Apologia/Defense (Eckhart's *Responsio*), the Avignon expert opinion, and the bull *In agro dominico*. This means that the treatise *Liber Benedictus* is indubitably authentic. This is specified in the first list of accusations as a work by Eckhart: "Isti sunt articuli extracti de libello, quem misit magister Ekardus reginae Ungariae, scriptum in Teutonico. Qui libellus sic incipit: 'Benedictus Deus et pater domini nostri Iesu Christi.'" ⁷ Eckhart's notes of his conversations with the novices about doctrinal questions in his time in Erfurt, the so-called *Discourses of Instruction*, contained no objectionable propositions, and are therefore not mentioned by the inquisitors. These have caused problems for modern research into Eckhart. "It was only in 1963, with the critical edition of the text, that Quint was able to establish Eckhart's authorship definitively, by means of detailed argumentation" ⁸—although the treatise itself explicitly mentions Eckhart as author in its prologue, ⁹ and the text was often listed

Processus contra magistrum Echardum" and "Magistri Echardi Responsio ad articulos sibi impositos de scriptis et dictis suis," in *Meister Eckhart, Die lateinischen Werke* V, pars 6: *Acta Echardiana*, ed. Josef Koch, Bernhard Geyer, and Loris Sturlese (Stuttgart: 2006), 197–520; the expert opinion of the commission of theologians in Avignon (*Votum theologorum Avenionensium*), transmitted in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod. Vat. Lat. 3899, fol. 124r–130r; edition: Loris Sturlese, "Acta Echardiana. Secunda pars. Processus contra magistrum Echardum," 568–590; John XXII's bull of condemnation, *In agro dominico* (27 March 1329), with 28 condemned propositions; edition: Loris Sturlese, "Acta Echardiana. Secunda pars. Processus contra magistrum Echardum," 596–600.

⁷ Loris Sturlese (ed.) *Magistri Echardi Responsio*, in *Meister Eckhart, Die lateinischen Werke* V pars 6: (*Acta Echardiana*) (Stuttgart: 2006), 305, 2–4.

⁸ Steer, "Die Schriften Eckharts" (note 1 above), 237. In this case too, Quint argues on the basis of alleged agreements with the papal bull: "I should like to emphasize here, as particularly significant for the question of Eckhart's authorship of the *Discourses of Instruction*, (1) the contact in terms of content with propositions 8, 14, 15, and 19 in the bull." Josef Quint, *Meister Eckhart, Die deutschen Werke* 5: *Meister Eckharts Traktate* (Stuttgart: 1963), 169. Specifically, this concerns points of contact with formulations to which objections were made in Eckhart's Pr. 6 (art. 8), the *Book of Divine Consolation* (art. 14), and the *Commentary on Wisdom* (art. 19). Only art. 15 of the bull cannot be demonstrated in any known work of Eckhart, except in the *Discourses*: "Jâ, der rehte wære gesetzet in den willen gotes, der ensölte niht wellen, diu sünde, dâ er in gevallen was, daz des niht geschehen wære" (DW V, 233, 4f.) corresponds roughly to art. 15 of the bull *In agro dominico*: "Si homo commississet mille peccata mortalia, si talis homo esset recte dispositus, non deberet velle se ea non commississe" (LW V, 598, 60f.); see also Quint, *Meister Eckhart, Die deutschen Werke* V, 339 n. 188.

⁹ "Daz sind die rede, die der vicarius von Türingen, der prior von Erfurt, bruoder Eckhart predigerordens mit solchen kindern hâte, diu in dirre rede vrâgeten vil dinges, dô sie

under his name (thanks to this prologue) in medieval library catalogues.¹⁰ The arguments about the treatise *Von Abgeschiedenheit* (*On Detachment*) proved even more problematic. This is not mentioned in the trial proceedings, nor is it attributed to Eckhart in any of the manuscripts,¹¹ but it is transmitted in the context of Eckhartian writings and discusses a central topic of his teaching about the intellect, the theorem of the *intellectus separatus* (*abegescheidenheit* in Middle High German). Although Germanists have accepted Kurt Ruh's verdict and exclude this treatise from Eckhart's German works,¹² historians of philosophy successfully consult it as a source for Eckhart's thinking.¹³ In the present essay, this text, which is included in the Stuttgart collected edition, will be discussed among the German works of Meister Eckhart, first because Quint could still appeal to it in his arguments for the authenticity of German sermons by Eckhart, and secondly because even Ruh was compelled to admit that the treatise possesses authentic traits—he called it the product of a “pupil” of Meister

sâzen in collationibus mit einander” (DW V, 185, 1–6). This prologue is transmitted in ten manuscripts; it is not found in the other 28. There is no manuscript that transmits this prologue in any other form, e.g. by mentioning another name as author.

¹⁰ See, e.g. a “Sermon Book” in the old library catalogue of the Dominican convent of Saint Catherine in Nuremberg, under the book number, shelf mark, E XV, which contained at its conclusion the *Discourses of Instruction* (“dy red, dy der vicarius von Dueringen, der prior von Erfort, pruder Eckart mit andechtigen kindern het”) and which was bequeathed to the convent by Anna Schürstab, widow of the Nuremberg patrician Konrad I. Imhoff; this codex is no longer extant. See Paul Ruf, *Mittelalterliche Bibliothekskataloge Deutschlands und der Schweiz* 3: *Bistum Bamberg* (Munich: 1939), 599–637, see 605. Karin Schneider, “Die Bibliothek des Katharinenklosters in Nürnberg und die städtische Gesellschaft,” in *Studien zum städtischen Bildungswesen des späten Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Bernd Moeller, Hans Patze, and Karl Stackmann (Göttingen: 1983), 70–82, see 79f.

¹¹ After the *Discourses of Instruction*, *Von Abgeschiedenheit* is the most widely transmitted treatise of Eckhart: in 1963, Quint edited it from 28 manuscripts (DW V, 377–82), and Ruh speaks in 1980 of 32 manuscripts; see Kurt Ruh, “Meister Eckhart,” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 2, ed. Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1980), 327–48, see 332.

¹² See Kurt Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik* 3: *Die Mystik des deutschen Predigerordens und ihre Grundlegung durch die Hochscholastik* (Munich: 1996), 349–51, 356–57, and Steer, “Die Schriften Meister Eckharts” (note 1 above), 237; Steer does not mention this treatise among the German works. The decisive argument for this elimination is a quotation from a “master,” which Ruh has identified as a quotation from Eckhart's Sermon 52. Since Eckhart would not introduce himself as “ein meister spricht,” the author of the treatise *Von Abgeschiedenheit* (*On Detachment*) cannot be Eckhart himself. However, this identification is not completely convincing; for details, see below.

¹³ See Markus Enders, “Abgeschiedenheit des Geistes—höchste ‘Tugend’ des Menschen und fundamentale Seinsweise Gottes. Eine Interpretation von Meister Eckharts Traktat: Von abegescheidenheit,” *Theologie und Philosophie* 71 (1996), 63–88, and recently Alesandro Palazzo, “‘Ez spricht gar ein hôher meister’: Eckhart e Avicenna,” in *Studi sulle fonti di Meister Eckhart*, ed. Loris Sturlese (Fribourg: 2008), 71–111, see 87–94.

Eckhart who worked with original texts of the Master.¹⁴ Hypotheses of this kind bear witness to the high degree of uncertainty involved in defining the German œuvre of Meister Eckhart.

The greatest difficulties in demonstrating authenticity are presented today, as in the past, by the German sermons. The precise extent of their textual material still remains an open question. On the basis of the material that has been gathered together since the 19th century, scholars today accept the existence of around 150 German sermons which can be attributed to Meister Eckhart as author.¹⁵ Quint elaborated a detailed scale of "diminishing authenticity," in keeping with which he classified the German sermons of the Stuttgart collected edition into four groups: (1) sermons which are attested as authentic by the trial proceedings and the so-called Apologia/Defense (nos. 1–16b). In his defense at the trial, Eckhart commented on the charges made in the list of accusations and acknowledged that the incriminated propositions had indeed been written by him, with one exception: he rejected the excerpts from Sermon 2 as a falsification.¹⁶ This acknowledgement by the author in person means that the sermons in this group are certainly authentic sermons by Meister Eckhart. (2) Sermons that are shown to be authentic through textual parallels with the Latin *Sermones* (nos. 17–24). (3) Sermons which are related by cross-references to the authentic sermons 1–24 and the genuine treatises *Liber Benedictus*, *Discourses of Instruction*, and *Von Abgeschiedenheit* (nos. 25–59). It is a typical stylistic device of Eckhart to refer in his work to what he has said on an earlier occasion. Here, we must draw a distinction between rhetorical decoration¹⁷ and autobiographical statement. In principle, two types of cross-references can be distinguished: general references such as "als ich mê gesprochen hân" and "als ich niuwelîche sprach" on the one hand, and concrete references to a place and time such as "als

¹⁴ See Kurt Ruh, *Meister Eckhart. Theologe, Prediger, Mystiker* (Munich: 1989), 165f.

¹⁵ See Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik* 3 (note 12 above), 223.

¹⁶ Loris Sturlese (ed.) *Magistri Echaridi Responsio* (note 7 above), 346f. n. 121–22: "Quinquagesimus primus in sermone 'Intravit Iesus in quoddam castellum'... Solutio. Dicendum quod in sermone illo, iam dudum mihi oblatum, multa inveni quae numquam dixi. Multa etiam ibidem scripta sunt absque intellectu obscura et confusa et quasi somnia; propter quod illa penitus reprobavi."

¹⁷ A number of cross-references cannot be identified with a statement from an authentic sermon by Eckhart. On the evaluation of the cross-references, see Freimut Löser, "Als ich mê gesprochen hân. Bekannte und bisher unbekannte Predigten Meister Eckharts im Lichte eines Handschriftenfundes," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 115 (1986), 206–27.

ich sprach an dem ôsterâbende" (Pr. 36a, DW II, 191, 10) or "als ich ê sprach ze sant Magfire" (i.e. in the convent of Benedictine nuns of the Holy Maccabees in Cologne) (Pr. 22, DW I, 380, 7f.). In many cases, textual parallels to such affirmations "once said" can be discovered in authentic sermons by Eckhart. (4) Sermons which can be authenticated by means of "cross-references" to sermons 25–29 and display agreements in content and style with the other German and Latin works of Eckhart (nos. 60–86).

The continuation of the project by Georg Steer involves the editing of a fifth group of sermons which "can be demonstrated to be authentic through investigations of the history of the transmission and of the text, and on the basis of agreements in terms of contents with the German and Latin works" (nos. 87–110). This fourth volume of the German works is not yet completed, and it is not known exactly how many sermons will appear in the collected edition. Steer approaches the question of identifying authentic Eckhart sermons via the history of transmission. After examining the entire manuscript transmission of a text, he attempts to establish the textual form that can be shown to be closest to the author himself. It is possible to filter out authentic words of the author Eckhart (even though their exact form has often been lost in the course of the textual history) only when we can see the textual genealogy and the various stages of revision by copyists and redactors.¹⁸ Accordingly, volume four is an exact continuation of Quint's last group—only the criterion of cross-references is missing—and will include all those sermons which could be established as Eckhartian either already by Quint in his preliminary investigations or by later researchers, thanks to textual parallels in contents and style. The attribution to Eckhart in the manuscripts continues to play an underlying role in establishing their authenticity,¹⁹ as does the perception of the preacher Meister Eckhart on the part of his contemporaries and the medieval recipients (the latter is a new element in the fourth volume). Steer rightly takes account of the existence of medieval collections of the

¹⁸ See the Preface to Georg Steer, *Meister Eckhart, Die deutschen Werke IV/1* (Stuttgart: 2003), vii–xviii.

¹⁹ See Steer's observations on the transmission of Sermon 100, which one manuscript explicitly calls *Sermo magistri Eghardi*. Excerpts from this sermon in the form of aphorisms were also attributed to Eckhart: *ibid.*, xi.

sermons of Meister Eckhart: the knowledge of these mostly anonymous collectors must be utilized for the modern collected edition.²⁰

A second problem, which concerns the sermons in particular, is the question of the form of the text. The Latin texts were usually copied verbatim and display only mechanical scribal errors which can be "corrected" relatively easily, but copyists of vernacular texts felt themselves far less bound to the original wording. They adapt a foreign dialect to their own, they abbreviate or interpolate, and alter the text as they see fit. In this situation, the modern editor must make a fundamental decision: either to attempt to reconstruct the lost original or else to present that text which was demonstrably in circulation in the course of history.

In his edition, Quint sought to establish Eckhart's original text, even down to details of wording where possible. Applying Lachmann's methodology, he analyzed and evaluated the manuscripts in order to construct a critically purified text "which offers us the sermon in question in its intellectual content and in its essential wording just as the preacher himself spoke it."²¹ Here we have the idea of the "sermon" as the immediate reflection of the word spoken in the pulpit, behind which there ultimately lies the idea (which has been definitively abandoned today) of the "sermon" as a text written down by the hearer(s).²² But all the sermons which have come down to us are texts meant to be read (i.e. literary products which were given a literary polish and stylistic redaction, in the ideal instance

²⁰ Steer, *Meister Eckhart, Die deutschen Werke* IV/1, ix: "In the historical process of adaptation, which begins at the end of the thirteenth century and finishes in the sixteenth century, many recipients possess knowledge about the author [i.e. Eckhart] over whose texts they are taking such pains in copies, redactions, excerpts, collections of *dicta*, and composite treatises." Examples of collections from Eckhart's own period are the *Paradisus anime intelligentis*, a collection of sermons of Dominican lectors in Erfurt from the mid-14th century (Philipp Strauch, ed. *Paradisus anime intelligentis* [*Paradis der fornuftigen sele*], 2nd ed. by Niklaus Largier and Gilbert Fournier (Berlin: 1998), or the Nuremberg Sermon Book from roughly the same period, which gathered together texts from Eckhart and his circle and was preserved in Saint Catherine's convent of Dominican nuns in Nuremberg: see Franz Jostes, *Meister Eckhart und seine Jünger. Ungedruckte Texte zur Geschichte der deutschen Mystik* (Fribourg: 1895; repr. with a glossary by Peter Schmitt and an Afterword by Kurt Ruh, Berlin: 1972). In the 15th century, the lay brother Lienhart Peuger in Melk assembled texts by Eckhart for the library of the lay brothers in his monastery: see Freimut Löser, *Meister Eckhart in Melk. Studien zum Redaktor Lienhart Peuger. Mit einer Edition des Traktats "Von der sel wirdichait vnd aigenschaft"* (Tübingen: 1999).

²¹ Quint, *Die Überlieferung der deutschen Predigten* (note 2 above), 946.

²² On this, see Steer, "Die Schriften Meister Eckharts" (note 1 above), 238.

by the preacher himself, but mostly by redactors who belonged to his circle).²³

Steer sticks more closely to the certainty of the historical transmission. An exact analysis of the transmission history of the manuscript material allows us to see the individual stages of the redaction of the text. The edited text should represent the text form closest to the author himself. It remains historically accessible, but it is certainly removed from the wording of the Eckhartian original.²⁴ The reader who uses this edition should become aware of the historical development of the text: "In Vol. IV, in addition to the original versions, information will always be given about the secondary versions too. In principle, this will take the form of a synopsis. In the case of sermons which are not known in their original version, only the secondary version will be offered."²⁵

2. THE EDITION OF THE GERMAN WORKS

It was the celebrated Germanist Franz Pfeiffer who in 1857 published the German œuvre of Meister Eckhart as the second volume of 14th-century German mystics. According to the state of Pfeiffer's knowledge, this œuvre consisted of 111 sermons and 18 treatises, in addition to a collection of 70 aphorisms and legendary narratives and 162 vernacular *Quaestiones*, to which Pfeiffer gave the title *Liber positionum*. He had collected this material over many years from 45 manuscripts. Unfortunately, it was not possible for him to publish a second section with notes and glossary, and above all with the criteria that had guided his edition and a critical apparatus with the variant readings. This means that the criteria governing Pfeiffer's selection and attribution of a text to Eckhart as its author remain unclear. The question of authenticity immediately proved to be the main problem with his edition. Scholars remain indebted to Adolf Spamer, who made a systematic conspectus of the transmission of Pfeiffer's Eckhart texts in 1909, complementing these with new discoveries and giving his own personal assessment of the authenticity of each of the texts.

²³ On the basic problem of the authenticity of the German sermon in the Middle Ages, see Kurt Ruh, "Deutsche Predigtbücher des Mittelalters," in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Predigt*, ed. Heimo Reinitzer (Hamburg: 1981), reprinted in Volker Mertens (ed.) *Kurt Ruh, Kleine Schriften 2* (Berlin and New York: 1984), 296–317, see 298–300.

²⁴ See Steer, *Meister Eckhart, Die deutschen Werke IV/1* (note 18 above), xvii.

²⁵ Steer, *Meister Eckhart, Die deutschen Werke IV/1*, xvii.

When the decision was taken in 1934 to publish Meister Eckhart's writings in the form of a new collected edition, the following goal was formulated: the edition would "re-establish the German and Latin writings of Meister Eckhart in accordance with the manuscripts." Josef Quint, who was entrusted with the task of editing the German works, had undertaken extensive preliminary investigations of the heuristics in his doctoral dissertation. However, it was not possible to give a satisfactory answer to the question of authenticity on the basis of the manuscripts alone. Quint elaborated the criteria discussed above on the basis of quotations from Eckhart's *Apologia/Defense* and parallels in the Latin *Sermones*, and organized the German sermon material in keeping with this. His three volumes of German sermons follow the structure of "decreasing authenticity," which means that the certainly genuine sermons are those of the heretic Eckhart, since it is these that contain the propositions to which the Inquisition objected. On the other hand, the sermons of the orthodox Catholic Eckhart lack decisive proofs of authenticity, and are gathered together at the end of the sermon corpus. They also fill the fourth volume, which remained unfinished at the time of Quint's death. In 1982, Georg Steer took over the task of continuing the Stuttgart collected edition, and in 2003 he published the first part of the fourth volume of the German works, which will contain the rest of Meister Eckhart's sermons.

This means that there is a dramatic gulf between the image of the theologian and philosopher Eckhart who wrote in Latin and whose oeuvre had been gathered together in a systematic collected edition as early as the late Middle Ages, and the image of the Dominican Eckhart who preached in the vernacular and whose sermon oeuvre is edited in complete accordance with the ecclesiastical Inquisition (i.e. in terms of the heresy it contains). Loris Sturlese has drawn attention to the dangers of this discrepancy, and especially to the catastrophic consequences for such a decontextualization of the German sermons.²⁶ One decisive step towards the reconstruction of a corpus of the German sermons of Meister Eckhart is their presentation in the sequence that he himself wished (i.e. in the liturgical sequence of the church's year).

²⁶ See Loris Sturlese, "Hat es ein Corpus der deutschen Predigten Meister Eckharts gegeben? Liturgische Beobachtungen zu aktuellen philosophiehistorischen Fragen," in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt*, ed. Andreas Speer and Lydia Wegener, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 32 (Berlin: 2005), 393–408, see 404f.; and Sturlese, "Die historisch-kritische Edition der Werke Meister Eckharts. Neue Interpretationen, neue Handschriften—neue Editionsprinzipien?" in *Editionen—Wandel und Wirkung*, ed. Annette Sell (Tübingen: 2007), 33–43.

3. THE TEXTS AND THEIR CONTENTS

3.1 *Discourses of Instruction*²⁷

The doctrinal discourses which Meister Eckhart held in Erfurt for novices and confreres in his order were combined via loose thematic links to form a treatise. These are his earliest known German texts. The oldest attested title runs: "Daz sind die rede, die der vicarius von turingen, der prior von Erfurt, bruoder Eckhart predigerordens mit solchen kindern hâte, diu in dirre rede vrâgeten vil dinges, dô sie sâzen in collationibus mit einander."²⁸ The prior held these discourses on topics of the correct lifestyle in the monastery before the assembled community in Erfurt between 1294 and 1298. What has been transmitted is the literary elaboration of the answers given by Eckhart to the questions of his confreres; the conversational character has largely been lost, but the sequence of the topics discussed has probably been preserved. These topics have left their mark on the titles of the 23 chapters.²⁹ The *collatio*, the doctrinal conversation, is firmly anchored in the spirituality of the Dominican order. The striking feature here is the use of the German vernacular, which Eckhart preferred to the official Latin, since his public included lay brothers, young novices, and also interested laypersons.³⁰

²⁷ The New High German version of the title is the translation of the secondary Middle High German title *Die rede der underscheidung* (Latin *discretio*), which occurs in a small group of late manuscripts and has become established in secondary literature on Eckhart. See Kurt Ruh, *Meister Eckhart. Theologe, Prediger, Mystiker* (note 14 above), 31. Critical edition: Meister Eckhart, *Die rede der underscheidung*, in *Meister Eckhart, Die deutschen Werke* V, ed. Josef Quint (Stuttgart: 1963), 137–76; Meister Eckhart, *Werke* II. Texts and translations by Ernst Benz, Karl Christ, Bruno Decker, Heribert Fischer, Bernhard Geyer, Josef Koch, Josef Quint, Konrad Weiß, and Albert Zimmermann, edited with a commentary by Niklaus Largier, (Frankfurt: 1993), 334–433 (*Reden der Unterweisung*). Secondary literature: Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik* 3 (note 12 above), 258–67, with further bibliography; Markus Enders, "Die Reden der Unterweisung: Eine Lehre vom richtigen Leben durch einen guten und vollkommenen Willen," in *Meister Eckhart: Lebensstationen—Redesituationen*, ed. Klaus Jacobi (Berlin: 1997), 69–92; and essays by various authors in Andreas Speer and Lydia Wegener (eds.) *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt* (Berlin: 2005), II. "Die Erfurter 'Rede,'" 109–78.

²⁸ Meister Eckhart, *Reden der Unterweisung*, DW V, 185, 1–6. ["These are the discourses which the Vicar of Thuringia, the prior of Erfurt, Brother Eckhart of the Order of Preachers, had with such <spiritual> children, who asked him about many points in these discourses when they sat together for doctrinal conversations in the evenings."]

²⁹ See Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik* 3 (note 12 above), 260. The *Discourses* are transmitted in two redactions. The secondary revision abbreviates and transposes; see Josef Quint in his Introduction to the edition, DW V, 173–78.

³⁰ See Walter Senner OP, "Die 'Rede der underscheidung' als Dokument dominikanischer Spiritualität," in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt* (note 27 above), 109–21, see 120f.: "the sisters

The 23 chapters of the *Discourses* can be subdivided into three thematic groups. Chapters 1–8, beginning with the monastic vow of obedience, deal with the abandoning of one's own self, which leads to "having God."³¹ The principal topics discussed in chapters 9–16 are sin, repentance, and penitence. Finally, chapters 17–23 discuss various questions connected with leading a spiritual life; no system can be discerned here.³² Chapter 20 presents a sermon in which Eckhart, in a fictitious dialogue with his hearers, deals with the questions of personal worthiness and the frequency of reception of the sacrament—questions which are posed very often in vernacular sermons and meditations.³³ In keeping with the "ethic of Being" that Eckhart propagated, the only thing that matters is the will and the disposition, not the sentiment and the pious feeling, for it is not the works that sanctify us—rather, it is we who should sanctify the works (DW V, 198, 1–3). This also implies the renunciation of every form of asceticism and external exercise.

Although the *Discourses of Instruction* are moral-practical rather than speculative, they already contain in a programmatic fashion the fundamental ideas of Eckhart's philosophy and theology. We can agree with Kurt Ruh that the leitmotiv of the *Discourses* is *Gelassenheit*,³⁴ which, together with *Abgeschiedenheit*, characterizes the one who has emptied himself of his own will. One who has left himself behind in this way will necessarily be given his form by the will of God, and will become one with God.

in the convents of Dominican nuns are also addressed as potential readers. With 51 manuscripts, the *Reden* is the one work of Eckhart with the widest publicity. It also circulated among groups of lay-persons and it is the one book that is linked with the name of Eckhart in the libraries of religious communities." See Ruh, *Geschichte der abendlandischen Mystik* 3 (note 12 above), 259. The earliest manuscript from the first half of the 13th century is written in the Thuringian dialect. See Georg Steer, "Meister Eckharts deutsche *reden* und *predigten* in seiner Erfurter Zeit," in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt* (note 27 above), 34–55, see especially 40.

³¹ Meister Eckhart, *Discourses of Instruction*, ch. 6: "Von der abegescheidenheit und von habenne gotes" (DW V, 200, 9).

³² See Senner, "Die 'Rede der underscheidunge'" (note 30 above), 114.

³³ See Ruh, *Meister Eckhart* (note 14 above), 40f.

³⁴ See Ruh, *Meister Eckhart*, 33. The Middle High German lexeme *gelâzenheit*, a feminine noun—*Gelassenheit* in the sense of self-emptying—is first attested in the *Discourses* (DW V, 283, 8): "dû bist ez in den dingen selber, daz dich hindert, wan dû heltest dich unordenlichen in den dingen. Dar umbe hebe an dir selber an ze dem êrsten und lâz dich . . . Nim dîn selbes war, und swâ dû dich vindest, dâ lâz dich; daz ist daz aller beste" (DW V, 193, 1–3 and 196, 3f.). ["<Rather,> it is you yourself in the things, that are a hindrance to yourself, since you have a wrong attitude to the things. Begin therefore with yourself and let yourself go! . . . Direct your attention to yourself, and where you find yourself, let yourself go; that is the very best thing."]

This imparting of form to the human being through the presence of God takes place in an “empty mind” (Latin *mens*), a collective concept which encompasses the powers of the soul: *memoria*, *intelligentia*, and *voluntas*.³⁵ God’s “necessary entering into”³⁶ the human being is not to be understood in moral terms, but as a metaphysical necessity.³⁷ Enders convincingly shows that the theme of the entire treatise of the *Discourses* is the task of giving up the human being’s own will—a theme that Eckhart will pursue throughout his entire literary production. As soon as the human will shuts down its own autonomous activity and abandons itself to the activity of the divine will, the human being becomes “the reference object of the essentially self-reflexive divine will . . . of God’s willing of his own self, of God’s absolute self-affirmation.”³⁸ This necessary self-communication is based in the Being of God: *bonum est diffusivum sui*.³⁹ Beyond this, there

³⁵ “Waz ist ein ledic gemüete? Daz ist ein ledic gemüete, daz mit nihte beworren enist noch ze nihte gebunden enist noch daz sîn bestez zu keiner wîse gebunden enhât noch des sînen niht enmeinet in deheinen dîngen, dan alzemâle in dem liebsten willen gotes versunken ist und des sînen ûzgegangen ist” (DW V, 190, 9–12). [“What is an empty mind? The empty mind is one that is not confused by anything and is not bound to anything that has not bound that which is its best to any specific way, and does not look to what is its own in anything. Rather, it is completely immersed in the beloved will of God and has emptied itself of what is its own.”] See Burkhard Hasebrink, “Sich erbilden. Überlegungen zur Semantik der Habitualisierung in den ‘Rede der unterscheidunge’ Meister Eckharts,” in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt* (note 27 above), 122–36, see 128f. The key word *gemüete* links the *Discourses* to Eckhart’s sermon cycle “On the eternal birth,” which consists of four texts which in turn display the form of the didactic conversation and are designated by Eckhart himself as *reden*; see Steer, “Meister Eckharts deutsche *reden* und *predigten* in seiner Erfurter Zeit,” in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt* (note 27 above), 34–55, see 45; Steer speaks of “four *quaestiones* in the form of sermons.” See also Georg Steer, “Meister Eckharts Predigtzyklus von der ewigen geburt. Mutmaßungen über die Zeit seiner Entstehung,” in *Deutsche Mystik im abendländischen Zusammenhang. Neu erschlossene Texte, neue methodische Ansätze, neue theoretische Konzepte*, ed. Walter Haug and Wolfram Schneider-Lastin (Tübingen: 2000), 253–81.

³⁶ “Swâ der mensche in gehôrsame des sînen ûzgât und sich des sînen erwiget, dâ an dem selben muoz got von nôt wider ingân; wan sô eines im selber nit enwil, dem muoz got wellen glîcher wîs als im selber” (DW V, 187, 1–3). [“Where the human being in obedience goes out from his ‘I’ and dismisses what is his own, God must necessarily enter in precisely there; for when someone does not will anything for himself, God must will for that person in the same way as He wills for himself.”]

³⁷ Loris Sturlese, “Meister Eckhart. Ein Porträt,” in *Homo divinus* (note 3 above), 15–34, speaks of the “theorem of *Abgeschiedenheit* in the *Discourses*,” which is indeed affirmed, but is neither justified nor set out in detail, since the *Discourses* are not a philosophical text (20f.), although they prepare the ground for Eckhart’s later speculations on the role of the intellect.

³⁸ Enders, “Die *Reden der Unterweisung*” (note 27 above), 76.

³⁹ See Enders, “Die *Reden der Unterweisung*,” 80.

exists only the Primal-One, which Eckhart will describe in one of his last sermons, the celebrated "sermon on poverty," as the "poverty of the will":

Dô ich stuont in mîner êrsten sache, dô enhâte ich keinen got, und dô was ich sache mîn selbes; dô enwolte ich nicht, noch enbegerte ich niht, wan ich was ein ledic sîn und ein bekenner mîn selbes nâch gebrûchlicher wârheit. Dô wolte ich mich selben und enwolte kein ander dinc; daz ich wolte, daz was ich, und daz ich was, daz wolte ich, und hie stuont ich ledic gotes und aller dinge . . . Alsô sprechen wir: sol der mensch arm sîn von willen, sô muoz er als lûtzel wellen und begern, als er wolte und begerte, dô er niht enwas. Und in dirre wîse ist der mensche arm, der niht enwil.⁴⁰

3.2 Liber Benedictus⁴¹

Eckhart's writing entitled *Liber Benedictus* consists of a treatise which discusses from a Christian viewpoint reasons for consolation in suffering (and which circulates traditionally under the title *Book of the divine consolation*),⁴² and of a sermon for reading, *Of the noble man*, a title suggested by a reference which Eckhart makes to a passage of Scripture in

⁴⁰ Meister Eckhart, Pr. 52; DW II, 492, 3–7 and 494, 1–3. ["While <as yet> I was in my first cause, I had no God, and then I was the cause of my own self; then I willed nothing and desired nothing, since I was an empty Being and a knower of my own self in the enjoyment of the truth. Then I willed myself and willed nothing else; what I willed, that I was; and what I was, that I willed; and here I was empty of God and of all things . . . Accordingly, we say: If the human being is to be poor in will, he must will and desire as little as he willed and desired while <as yet> he did not exist. And it is in this way that the human being who desires nothing is poor."]

⁴¹ Critical edition: Meister Eckhart, "*Liber Benedictus*," in Meister Eckhart, *Die deutschen Werke* V, ed. Josef Quint (Stuttgart: 1963), 1–136; Largier (ed.), *Meister Eckhart, Werke* II (note 27 above) (Frankfurt am Main: 1993), 748–89 (*Liber "Benedictus"*). Secondary literature: Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik* 3 (note 12 above), 308–23, with further bibliography. New translation, with a detailed Afterword which integrates recent research: Meister Eckhart, *Das Buch der göttlichen Tröstung. Vom edlen Menschen*, Mittelhochdeutsch und Neuhochdeutsch. Translated with an Afterword by Kurt Flasch (Munich: 2007).

⁴² *Buch der göttlichen Tröstung*. As in the case of the *Discourses*, this New High German version of the title is the translation of a secondary Middle High German title: *daz buoch der göttlichen træstunge*, which Pfeiffer chose for his edition and which was retained by Quint for the treatise section of the writing. Kurt Ruh pointed out that the title *buoch der göttlichen træstunge* does not come from Eckhart; see Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik* (note 12 above), 308 n. 145. It was added by a later hand to the end paper of the 14th-century Basel parchment manuscript Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. B IX 15. It appears that the title was added, together with a brief indication of the contents, in the course of the cataloguing of the library of the Charterhouse in Basel, where the codex was from the 15th century onwards; see Ulla Williams, "*Vatter ler mich*. Zur Funktion von Verba und Dicta im Schrifttum der deutschen Mystik," in *Heinrich Seuses Philosophia spiritualis. Quellen, Konzept, Formen und Rezeption*, ed. Rüdiger Blumrich and Philipp Kaiser (Wiesbaden: 1994), 173–88, see 180–82.

this sermon.⁴³ The *Liber Benedictus* is the only one of Eckhart's German writings that is indubitably authentic, since it is explicitly ascribed to the Master in the first list of accusations at the trial in Cologne: "Isti sunt articuli extracti de libello, quem misit magister Ekardus reginae Ungariae, scriptum in Teutonico. Qui libellus sic incipit: 'Benedictus deus et pater domini nostri Iesu Christi.'" ⁴⁴ The authentic title is thus the first words of the Latin biblical passage 2 Cor. 1:3, which introduce the treatise section. This is confirmed both by Eckhart himself ⁴⁵ and by the *explicit* of one of the two complete textual witnesses at the end of the sermon section: *Explicit liber benedictus*.⁴⁶ The list of accusations also informs us about a prominent addressee among the readers of Eckhart's book of consolation: Agnes of Austria (1281–1364), queen of Hungary, who withdrew in 1318 to the convent of Poor Clares which she had founded in Königsfelden, not far from the family seat of the Habsburgs, where she led a semi-cloistered life until her death, with her own house and servants outside the convent walls. She personally governed the convent and brought it prestige and prosperity. The acts of Eckhart's trial indicate that he had sent her the book. The events of the queen's life—she had lost her husband, Andrew III of Hungary, in 1301, and her father, Albrecht I of Habsburg, in 1308—make her seem the ideal addressee of a book of consolation, and it has

⁴³ See Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*: "Von dem, wie daz innigeste und daz oberste der sêle schepfet und nimet gotes sun und gotes-sun-werden in des himelschen vaters schôze und herzen, daz suoche nâch dem ende dis buoches, dâ ich schrîbe 'von dem edeln menschen, der ûz vuor in ein verrez lant nemen an sich ein rîche und wider ze komene'" (DW V, 44, 27–45, 3). ["The innermost and uppermost part of the soul creates and conceives in the womb and heart of the heavenly Father the Son of God and becoming-God's-Son; how, you will find in the appendix to this book, where I write about 'a noble man who went out to a distant land in order to gain a kingdom, and then returned'" (Flasch, 63); cf. Lk. 19:12].

⁴⁴ Loris Sturlese (ed.), *Magistri Echardi Responsio* (note 7 above), 305, 2–4.

⁴⁵ See Sturlese, *Magistri Echardi Responsio*, n. 78, 276, 11–12: "Primo enim ponuntur quindecim, excerpti de quodam libro quem scripsi, qui incipit 'Benedictus deus.'" Eckhart's number "fifteen" refers to 13 articles taken from the *Book of the divine consolation* and to two taken from the sermon *On the noble man*; see also Quint, DW V, 107.

⁴⁶ See Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. B IX 15, fol. 29ra, in red ink between the two columns of writing; Quint, DW V, 119. The transmission of the text is narrow: in two complete manuscripts (Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. B IX 15, and Munich, Bibliothek der Benediktinerabtei St Bonifaz, Cg.1, both from the 14th century) and in two fragmentary textual witnesses (St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 1067, and Trier, Stadtbibliothek, Cod. 627, both from the 15th century). Besides this, the sermon section is attested on its own in a further manuscript: Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod. theol. et philos. 8° 13, from the 15th century; its textual quality should be regarded as superior to that of the older complete manuscripts; see Quint, DW V, 106.

often been assumed that the work was written directly for her.⁴⁷ There is, however, nothing at all in the text itself to lend any support to this thesis.⁴⁸

The link to Agnes of Hungary has prompted attempts to date the *Liber Benedictus*. The early dating assumes that it was written between 1308 and 1311; the murder of Albrecht I of Habsburg in 1308 is taken here as the occasion for its composition. Ruh posits the queen's entry into the convent in 1318 as the *terminus post quem*, and he sees links between Eckhart's teaching in the *Liber Benedictus* and the writings of the *Opus tripartitum*. Since scholarly opinion about the dating of the later text is likewise "on the move," the only safe conclusion is that of Kurt Flasch: "The time of composition of Eckhart's book of consolation can be fixed only approximately; it was probably written between 1313 and 1323, i.e. in the second half of Eckhart's life."⁴⁹

Eckhart himself subdivides the *Liber Benedictus* into three parts.⁵⁰ First, in a theological-speculative essay, he sets out the metaphysical truths which alone are able to help the human being in every situation of suffering (DW V, 9, 4–15, 5); in a second part, he compiles around 30 reasons for consolation (DW V, 15, 7–56, 15); and, in the third part, he offers an anthology of exemplary works and words of wise masters who remained steadfast in suffering (DW V, 56, 17–61, 9). This is followed immediately by the sermon *On the noble man* (DW V, 109–19), to which Eckhart refers in the second part of his book of consolation, without however including it in his analysis of the structure of the work.⁵¹ The sermon can be

⁴⁷ This view has been widely held among scholars since Quint, DW V, 6: "It is certain that it was written as a book of consolation for Queen Agnes of Hungary, who had suffered so much."

⁴⁸ See Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik* 3 (note 12 above), 322f.

⁴⁹ Flasch, *Meister Eckhart, Das Buch der göttlichen Tröstung* (note 41 above), 120, with bibliography on the debate about the dating of the work.

⁵⁰ See Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*: "und hât diz buoch driu teil. In dem êrsten hât man etliche wârheit, dar ûz und dâ von genomen wirt, daz den menschen billiche und wol genzliche getroesten mac und sol in sînem leide. Dar nâch vindet man hie bî drîzic sachen und lêren, in der man sich in ieglicher wol und ganze getroesten mac. Her nâch vindet man in dem dritten teile dis buoches bilde an werken und an Worten, diu wise liute hânt getân und gesprochen, als sie wâren in lidenne" (DW V, 8, 11–9, 2) ["This book has three parts. The first part contains so much truth that a consolation can be gained from it—a consolation which can and will certainly give full consolation to the human person in all his suffering. After this there are about thirty teachings, each of which is sufficient to give well-founded, complete consolation. In the third part of the book one finds examples of deeds and words which wise persons have done and spoken, when they suffered"] (Flasch, 9).

⁵¹ See note 43 above.

understood, in Kurt Ruh's words, as "directions for a life turned away from the world."⁵²

Eckhart thus begins with the theoretical basis of his teaching on the highest level of abstraction, descends gradually to practical spirituality, and returns with the sermon *On the noble man* to the path of ascent to unity with the divine ground.⁵³ The first, theoretical part contains the essential existential teaching of the *Liber Benedictus*. Eckhart begins by explaining the relationship between the general definitions (the transcendentals) to the individual (i.e. the relationship between wisdom, justice, goodness, and truth to the wise, the just, the good, and the true). They are related like the general to an individual, like the abstract to the concrete, like God the Father to God the Son, and in such a way that the general definition is present in its totality in the concrete individual. Eckhart's presupposition is that the transcendentals are uncreated and uncreatable,⁵⁴ but that they diffuse themselves, metaphorically speaking, in an act of giving birth. This leads to a "metaphysic of 'being in': everything that is brought forth is in that which brings it forth," as Eckhart affirms in his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, which was written around the same time.⁵⁵ The wise, the just, the good, the true person is the presence of God on earth. Insofar as (*in quantum*) the just person is just, he is "born" of justice and is one with it, since the relationship between giving birth and being born establishes an ontological equality.⁵⁶ And this "relationship between the uncreated, unborn justice to the uncreated but born just person is the relationship between God the Father and God the Son."⁵⁷

Von dem êrsten sol man wîzen, daz der wîse und wîsheit, wâre und wârheit, gerehte und gerehticheit, guote und güete sich einander anesehent und alsô ze einander haltent: diu güete enist noch geschaffen noch gemachet noch geborn; mêr si ist gebernde und gebirt den guoten, und der guote, als verre sô er guot ist, ist ungemachet und ungeschaffen und doch geborn kint und sun der güete. Diu güete gebirt sich und allez, daz si ist, in dem guoten . . . Guot und güete einsint niht wan êin güete al ein in allem sunder

⁵² Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik* 3 (note 12 above), 311.

⁵³ See Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik* 3, 318.

⁵⁴ See Flasch, *Meister Eckhart, Das Buch der göttlichen Tröstung* (note 41 above), 124 and 132; Flasch refers to the *First Paris Quaestio* from Eckhart's first period as *magister* in Paris (1302/03) as the basis of this teaching.

⁵⁵ See Flasch, *Meister Eckhart, Das Buch der göttlichen Tröstung*, 122; the *Liber Benedictus* and the *Commentary on John* complement each other in their argumentation.

⁵⁶ See Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik* 3 (note 12 above), 313.

⁵⁷ Flasch, *Meister Eckhart, Das Buch der göttlichen Tröstung* (note 41 above), 133.

gebern und geborn-werden; doch daz gebern der güete und geborn-werden in dem guoten ist al ein wesen, ein leben.⁵⁸

Eckhart very consciously chooses the metaphor of “seeing” in order to illustrate the relationship of the universals to the individual: this is the relationship of the one who sees to that which is seen in the act of looking at one another, or the relationship of the one who knows in his intellect to that which is known.⁵⁹ In a number of sermons, Eckhart compares this immediate knowledge in the unity of the intellect with the act of seeing. His most spectacular formulation is perhaps in Pr. 12 (*Qui audit me*):

Sol mîn ouge sehen die varwe, sô muoz ez ledic sîn aller varwe. Sihe ich blawe oder wîze varwe, diu gesiht mînes ougen, daz dâ sihet die varwe, daz selbe, daz dâ sihet, daz ist daz selbe, daz dâ gesehen wirt mit dem ougen. Daz ouge, dâ inne ich got sihe, daz ist daz selbe ouge, dâ inne mich got sihet: mîn ouge und gotes ouge daz ist éin ouge und éin gesiht und éin bekennen und éin minnen.⁶⁰

Eckhart appeals here to Aristotle's *De anima* (i.e. *sensum et sensibile in actu esse idem*), as he states in his *Commentary on John* and, in very similar terms, in his *Expositio libri Genesis*. The authoritative backup is missing in

⁵⁸ Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 9, 4–15. [“Above all, it is necessary to know that the wise person and wisdom, the true person and the truth, the just person and justice, the good person and goodness look at one another. Their relationship to one another is as follows: Goodness itself is neither created nor made nor born. But it gives birth, and it gives birth to the good person. And the good person, by virtue of the fact that he is good, is not made and not created; rather, he is child and son, born of goodness. Goodness gives birth to itself and to all that it is in the good person . . . good and goodness are nothing other than one single goodness, completely one in everything other than in giving birth and being born. The giving birth of goodness and the being born in the good person are utterly one single Being, one single life.”] (Flasch, 9–11).

⁵⁹ See Flasch, *Meister Eckhart, Das Buch der göttlichen Tröstung* (note 41 above), 122. Flasch sees the background of the theory of seeing and of intellectual knowledge in the Aristotelian-Averroist philosophy, as interpreted by Dietrich of Freiberg. See Flasch, *Meister Eckhart. Die Geburt der “Deutschen Mystik” aus dem Geist der arabischen Philosophie* (Munich: 2006), 120. Flasch's translation—“sehen einander an” (“look at one another,” “mutuo respiciunt” in Eckhart's *Responsio*)—is the first to do justice to the philosophical content. Older suggested translations by Germanists treat this formulation in a purely metaphorical manner and dissolve it into something concrete: “auf einander Bezug nehmen” (“relate to one another,” Quint), “aufeinander bezogen sind” (“are related to one another,” Ruh).

⁶⁰ Meister Eckhart, Pr. 12, DW I, 201, 2–8. [“If my eye is to see the color, it must be empty of all color. If I see a blue or white color, it is my eye's act of seeing which sees the color—that which sees is the same as that which is seen with the eye. The eye in which I see God is the same eye in which God sees me; my eye and God's eye, that is one eye and one seeing and one knowing and one loving.”]

the vernacular work;⁶¹ only the professional theologian will be aware of the background to this passage of the *Liber Benedictus*. Further on, however, Eckhart will speak more precisely of the eye, of the act of seeing, and of color; and he does the same in the sermon *On the noble man*.⁶²

The metaphysics of divine sonship which has been set out up to this point (DW V, 9, 4–10, 10) is supported by the authority of Sacred Scripture, and more precisely by the prologue to the Gospel of John: “The power to become sons of God has been given to all those who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of the man, but of God and out of God alone,”⁶³ a text which Eckhart then expounds (DW V, 10, 11–11, 19). The “blood” designates the involuntary, purely bodily functions; the “will of the flesh” designates voluntarily directed action in the collision between rational insight and bodily needs; finally, the “will of the man” designates the highest, purely spiritual powers of the soul—but these too must detach themselves from all that is creaturely and be “de-formed” of themselves, in order to be “super-formed” in God and to be born in him. Eckhart draws the following conclusion:

Ûzer aller dirre lêre, diu in dem heiligen êwangelîô geschriben ist und sicherliche bekant in dem natürlîchen liehte der vernünfftigen sêle, vindet der mensche gewâren trôst alles leides.⁶⁴

Eckhart closes the theoretical part with reflections on what this “true consolation” consists of (DW V, 11, 23–15,5). In God there is neither sadness nor suffering. This means that one who detaches himself completely from what is creaturely, and turns wholly to God, cannot be affected by any suffering. Or, to put it differently, one who suffers merely shows thereby that he loves external things (i.e. creatures)—for it is only these that can

⁶¹ The passage in Aristotle is *De anima* 3, 2, 425b 26f., quoted in the *Commentary on John* n. 107, LW III, 91, 8–10, and in the *Expositio libri Genesis* (on Gen. 2:24), In Gen. I, n. 199, LW I, 1, 346, 4–6 (Rec. CT); LW I, 2, 229, 2–4 (Rec. L); on this complex as a whole, see Dagmar Gottschall, “Nikolaus von Straßburg, Meister Eckhart und die *cura monialium*,” in *Meister Eckharts Straßburger Jahrzehnt*, ed. Andrés Quero-Sanchez and Georg Steer (Stuttgart: 2008), 95–118, see 115–17.

⁶² See Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 28, 9–16 and 117, 13–18; both passages are placed on the lips of “the masters,” and both passages refer to Aristotle, *De anima*.

⁶³ See Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 10, 17–20. The text is Jn 1:12–13: “dedit eis potestatem filios Dei fieri, his, qui credunt in nomine eius: qui non ex sanguinibus, neque ex voluntate carnis, neque ex voluntate viri, sed ex Deo nati sunt.”

⁶⁴ Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 11, 20–22. [“From all this teaching, which is written in the holy Gospel and is recognized with certainty in the natural light of the rational soul, the human person finds true consolation in all suffering.”] (Flasch, 13–15).

be taken away from him by a blow of fate.⁶⁵ The overcoming of suffering in God is the only truly essential consolation, and this is the real theme of the *Liber Benedictus* as a whole.

The second and longest part of the *Liber Benedictus* presents a collection of reasons for consolation, which at first sight seem not to be structured in any way.⁶⁶ On closer examination, however, we see that Eckhart here develops for practical spirituality the speculative teaching that he has elaborated in the first part (and in earlier writings). This means that, as Flasch correctly observes, the second part "must be read in the light of the first."⁶⁷

In the second part too, Eckhart undertakes the fundamental reconciliation between philosophy and theology. He addresses "reasonable" readers⁶⁸ and gives detailed support to his theses with examples from the field of natural philosophy or natural science, but the authorities to which he appeals are Sacred Scripture and the church fathers. Eckhart again teaches detachment from all transient things (DW V, 17, 9–18, 11), explains the role of the equality through which one must pass on the path to unity (DW V, 18, 12–19, 4 and 34, 4–14), and demands that one must give up one's own will and become united to the divine will (DW V, 20, 6–23, 11). Eckhart teaches that one must leave behind oneself all that is individual (*diz und daz*) (i.e. suffering), in order to find that which is truly real (DW V, 24,

⁶⁵ See Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*: "Nû spriche ich vûrbaz, daz allez leit kumet von liebe des, daz mir schade hât benomen. Ist mir danne schade ûzerlîcher dinge leit, daz ist ein wâr zeichen, daz ich minne ûzerlîchiu dinc und minne in der wârheit leit und untrôst... Wêrlîche, vûrwâr unmûgêlich ist gote und aller der werlt, daz der mensche gewâren trôst vinde, der trôst suochet an den crêatûren. Der aber got minnete aleine in der crêatûre und die crêatûre in gote aleine, der vûnde gewâren, rehten und glîchen trôst in allen enden." (DW V, 14, 9–15, 4). ["Then I say, further: all suffering comes from the love of that which misfortune has taken from me. If I suffer at the loss of external things, this is a true sign that I love external things, i.e. in truth, I love suffering and distress... For by God and by all the world, it is in fact impossible that a human being should genuinely find consolation when he seeks consolation in creatures. But if one loved God alone in the creatures, and the creatures in God alone, then he would everywhere find true, proper, and constant consolation."] (Flasch, 19).

⁶⁶ However, I would not agree with Flasch in speaking of "little anecdotes" (*Geschichten*, 137), of "a philosophy of consolation in the tone of a friendly chat" (*Plauderton*) and "classical wisdom teaching served up in small portions" (128), since Eckhart proceeds more systematically and theologically than such terms suggest.

⁶⁷ Flasch, *Meister Eckhart. Das Buch der göttlichen Tröstung* (note 41 above), 137.

⁶⁸ See Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*: "Nû volget hernâch in dem andern teile von den stücken bî drîzigen, der ieglichez aleine billiche trœsten sol den redelîchen menschen in sinem leide." (DW V, 15, 7–9). ["Now there follow in the second part thirty pieces of proof, each one of which is able to console a reasonable human being in his suffering."] (Flasch, 19).

4–25, 7 and 26, 16–27, 7). He explains the basis of his philosophy of being empty and having nothing, which means for the intellect that it “mit nihte niht gemeine enhât” [“has nothing in common with anything”] and is thus enabled to receive everything (God) (DW V, 28, 3–30, 18). Equality and the blaze of love carry the soul upwards into the origin, into the One (DW V, 31, 1–35, 7). Eckhart sums up what he has said up to this point: “Nû mac der mensche offenlîche bekennen, warumbe und wâ von er ungetrœstet ist in allem sînem leide, ungemach und schaden. Daz kumet alles und aleine dâ von, daz er verre von gote ist und niht ledic der créâtûre, gote unglîch und kalt an götlicher minne.”⁶⁹

Eckhart also points out that all we have lost was only lent to us (DW V, 37, 4–38, 2), and that one can confidently renounce external exercises and works, since the only thing that counts is the internal work, outside time and space, which is effective even in repose (DW V, 38, 3–42, 8). In this context, where he speaks of the virtue that comes to perfection in the internal work, Eckhart finds it quite natural to speak of the suffering which makes one blessed. Virtue wants to “suffer through God,” and it finds its blessedness in the suffering which is outside time. Eckhart quotes here for the first time the eighth beatitude: “‘sælic sint, die dâ lîdent durch die gerehticheit.’”⁷⁰ The idea of suffering that makes one blessed is in accord with the Christian theology of suffering, and is the theme that a reader expects in a medieval Christian book of consolation. Eckhart meets this expectation, but he interprets suffering rigorously in his own sense. He refers neither to the passion of Christ nor to eternal joys after death. With his choice of the biblical logion about righteousness, Eckhart takes hold of one of the general definitions in Part 1: “righteousness/justice” stands for God. One who suffers for the sake of righteousness/justice is righteous/just. The good and righteous/just person, to the extent that he is good, is one with God. Eckhart says “daz ein guot mensche, von güete und in got geborn, tritet in alle die eigenschaft götlicher natûre.”⁷¹ The suffering of a

⁶⁹ Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 35, 8–11 [“Now the human person can clearly grasp why and whence he is not consoled in all his suffering, misfortune, and hurt. This is always due exclusively to the fact that he is far from God and is not empty of creatures, that he is unequal to God and is cold as regards the divine love.”] (Flasch, 47).

⁷⁰ Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 39, 19–20 [“Blessed are those who suffer for righteousness’ sake”] (Flasch, 55). The biblical text is Matt. 5:10, “Beati, qui persecutionem patiuntur propter iustitiam.” Eckhart changes the meaning of this text from the concrete to the general.

⁷¹ Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 43, 18–19 [“A good person, who is born in God of goodness, enters into all the characteristic traits of the divine nature.”] (Flasch, 61).

good person in God and for the sake of God is always kept safe in God, and is thereby blessedness.

Und dar umbe sprach ich dâ oben, daz der guote mensche wil und wölte alle zît liden durch got, niht geliten hân: lîdende hât er, daz er minnet . . . Alsô wærlîche: dem gotes sune, einem guoten menschen, sô vil er gotes sun ist, durch got liden, durch got wûrken ist sîn wesen, sîn leben, sîn wûrken, sîn sælicheit, wan also sprichet unser herre: "sælic sint, die dâ lident durch die gerehticheit."⁷²

He repeats this quotation four more times before the close of the second part. Up to that point, he will speak of suffering, and he will do so in a completely traditional manner: whatever we suffer happens only for our best (DW V, 47, 3–48, 2); God chastises and puts to the test those whom he accepts as sons (DW V, 48, 3–49, 5); God rejoices in the human being who suffers in patience (DW V, 49, 6–14). God promises his assistance to the one who suffers (DW V, 49, 15–54, 7). This reason for consolation is particularly important in Eckhart's eyes, and he expounds it in seven didactic passages. In the second of these passages, he reflects: if God is with us in suffering, what else should we then want, other than suffering? And he quotes Bernard of Clairvaux: "Ez sprichet unser herre: ich bin mit dem menschen in lidenne. Dar ûf sprichet sant Bernhart: herre, bist dû mit uns in lidenne, sô gip mir liden alle zît, umbe daz dû alle zît bî mir sîst, daz ich dich alle zît habe."⁷³ Eckhart stands here in a tradition which had been a living reality in preaching and ascetic praxis down through the centuries, and which was still alive in his own days. Ruh rightly affirms that "One must emphasize these elements, in order to avoid locating Eckhart—because of his uniqueness—outside the intellectual world in which he stood."⁷⁴ Eckhart makes use of the forms of a tradition that he fills with new contents. At the end of the sixth didactic piece, he offers the following summary:

⁷² Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 44, 10–20 ["This is why I said above that the good person always wants to suffer for the sake of God; he does not want to have suffered. When he suffers, he has what he loves . . . And this is exactly how it is with the son of God, i.e. for a <good> person, to the extent that he is God's son: suffering for the sake of God, working for the sake of God are in truth his Being and his life, his working and his blessedness. This is why our Lord says: 'Blessed are those who suffer for the sake of righteousness/justices.'"] (Flasch, 63).

⁷³ Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 51, 1–3 ["Our Lord says: 'I am with the human being in his suffering.' To this, Saint Bernard replies: 'Lord, if you are with us in suffering, then let me always suffer, in order that you may always be with me, that I may always possess you.'"] (Flasch, 73).

⁷⁴ Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik* 3 (note 12 above), 312.

Nû mac man offenbârliche bekennen, wie billiche und in vil wîse ein guot mensche allenthalben getrœstet wirt in lîdenne, an leide und wûrkenne. Ein wîse ist, ob er lîdet und wûrket durch got; ein ander wîse, ob er ist in gôtlicher minne.⁷⁵

He draws his final conclusion in the seventh piece: the strongest consolation in the affirmation that God is with us in suffering lies in the fact that God is the pure One, without any individualization and differentiation; everything that is in him is God himself.

Und, wan daz wâr ist, sô spriche ich: allez, daz der guote mensche lîdet durch got, daz lîdet er in gote, und got ist mit im lîdende in sînem lîdenne. Ist mîn lîden in gote unde mitlîdet got, wie mac mir denne lîden leit gesîn, sô lîden leit verliuset und mîn leit in gote ist und mîn leit got ist... sô ich vinde lûter lîden durch got und in gote, dâ vinde ich got mîn lîden.⁷⁶

Suffering through righteousness/justice means suffering through God and suffering in God. Everything that is in God is God—hence, suffering too is God. Since God suffers with me, suffering contains blessedness, and Eckhart can make this exhortation: “Nâch dirre wîse sô lîdet durch got, sît ez so groezliche nütze ist und sælicheit. ‘Sælic sint,’ sprach unser herre, ‘die dâ lîdent durch die gerehticheit.’”⁷⁷ Eckhart closes the second part by taking a stance against the widespread view that the suffering of good persons is evidence of their secret sins, which God is punishing in this way. This would apply only to genuine external suffering; in that case, the sufferer would not be good and born in God. If, however, the sufferer is good, then his suffering is only apparent. In reality, since suffering is God, it is blessedness.

In the third part of the *Liber Benedictus*, Eckhart addresses not the rational, but the “good persons” and proclaims consolation in the example of wise and experienced people who have overcome suffering. There are five

⁷⁵ Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 53, 6–9 [“Now one can recognize very clearly how easily and how diversely a good person is consoled in suffering, whether in suffering or in acting. The first kind of consolation: when he suffers and acts for the sake of God. The second kind: when he stands still in the love of God.”] (Flasch, 77).

⁷⁶ Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 53, 19–54, 6 [“Since this is true, I draw the conclusion that everything that the good person suffers for the sake of God, he suffers in God. And God suffers with him in his suffering. But if my suffering is in God and God suffers with me, how then can suffering be affliction for me, if suffering loses <its> affliction? If my affliction is in God and affliction is God? ... Precisely in this way, I discover, when I find pure suffering for the sake of God and in God, that my suffering is God.”] (Flasch, 79).

⁷⁷ Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 54, 8–9 [“Suffer in this way for the sake of God! For it is so immensely useful, it is blessedness. Our Lord said: ‘Blessed are those who suffer for the sake of righteousness/justice.’”] (Flasch, 79).

brief *exempla* from the sphere of practical spirituality, as this is inculcated in the classical collections of the *Vitaspatrum* and the *Verba seniorum*.⁷⁸ Easily grasped and edifying narratives of this kind are addressed here to the beginners in the spiritual life. Naturally, they must also be read with a look backward to the first part of Eckhart's book of consolation; but here, the metaphysics of divine sonship is only a distant echo. Instead, Eckhart offers a familiar line of thought (i.e. the eternal reward for which the human person here and now may readily accept pain and distress). We might say that Eckhart reaches the simplest and lowest level of argumentation in the third part. In the subsequent sermon part, he will ascend from this level and return to his starting point.

Before doing so, however, Eckhart concludes the third part with an apologia.⁷⁹ As if in a premonition of the trial before the Inquisition, Eckhart rebuts potential attacks. If one of the learned men does not understand his teaching and reacts to it with hostility, he has not come very far intellectually—and that is not Eckhart's fault. He may well expect a warning not to spread such teachings before unlearned persons (i.e. in the vernacular), and Eckhart rejects this in the celebrated words: "Dar zuo spriche ich: ensol man niht lêren ungelêrte liute, sô enwirt niemer nieman gelêret, sô enmac nieman lêren noch schrîben. Wan dar umbe lêret man die ungelêrten, daz sie werden von ungelêret gelêret. Enwære niht niuwes, sô enwürde niht altes."⁸⁰ And Meister Eckhart consciously locates his *Liber Benedictus* in the tradition of the Gospel of John:

Sant Johannes sprichet daz heilige êwangelium allen geloubigen und ouch allen ungeloubigen, daz sie geloubic werden, und doch beginnet er daz êwangelium von dem hœhesten, daz kein mensche von gote hie gesprechen mac: und ouch sint sîniu wort und ouch unsers herren wort dicke unrehte vernomen.⁸¹

⁷⁸ On the significance of the spirituality of the monastic fathers for 14th-century mysticism, especially for Suso, see Williams, "*Vatter ler mich*" (note 42 above).

⁷⁹ See Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 6, 5–61, 9.

⁸⁰ Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 60, 28–61, 1 ["But I maintain that if one is not permitted to teach the unlearned, then no one will ever be educated and no one can ever teach or write. For the only reason why one teaches uneducated persons is in order to change them from uneducated to educated persons. If there were nothing new, then nothing would ever become old."] (Flasch, 91).

⁸¹ Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 61, 5–9 ["Saint John proclaims the holy Gospel to all the believers, but also to all the unbelievers, in order that these may become believers. And yet he begins the Gospel with the highest affirmation that a human being in earthly life was ever able to say about God, and his words—as well as the words of our Lord—have in truth been often falsely understood."] (Flasch, 91).

The following sermon *On the noble man* is composed by Eckhart as a sermon meant to be read,⁸² and expounds its text according to the scholastic method of *litteras punctare*: “Unser herre sprichet in dem êwangelîô: ‘ein edel mensche vuor ûz in ein verrez lant enpfâhen im ein rîche und kam wider.’”⁸³ Eckhart gives a brief survey of the contents: these words speak of the nobility of human nature, then of its divine goal; finally, they say how the human being attains this goal.⁸⁴

First of all, Eckhart expounds *homo quidam*, drawing a distinction between the external and the internal human being. Only the inner human being should be evaluated positively, since he belongs to the Spirit and is oriented to the things of heaven: this is what makes him “the noble man.” He is the field in which God has sowed his image and likeness. This divine seed is the Son of God, the Word of God. The good seed can indeed be covered over by the weeds (the external human being), but it cannot be destroyed.⁸⁵ Eckhart then applies other metaphors from the fields of nature and craftsmanship to the relationship between the internal and the external human being, and presents confirmation from the church fathers and Sacred Scripture.⁸⁶

In order to uncover the good seed and attain the divine goal, the human person must “go out”: *nobilis abiit in regionem longinquam*. With Augustine,⁸⁷ Eckhart divides this path into six levels that lead step by step to spiritual perfection. On the final and highest level, the human person has detached himself totally from the temporal, transient life and has been “super-formed” into a divine image. He has become the child of

⁸² This text too has only a narrow transmission: it is transmitted together with the book of consolation in the two complete manuscripts of the *Liber Benedictus*, and once separately (see n. 46 above).

⁸³ Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 109, 1–2 [“Our Lord says in the Gospel: ‘A noble man went out to a distant land in order to gain a kingdom, and then returned.’”] (Flasch, 95). The scriptural text is Lk. 19:12, “Homo quidam nobilis abiit in regionem longinquam accipere sibi regnum, et reverti.” This is the beginning of the Gospel for 2 September, the Feast of Saint Stephen of Hungary. This liturgical placing has given rise to speculation that the sermon was written for Queen Agnes of Hungary and delivered in her presence; see Quint, *Meister Eckhart, Die deutschen Werke V* (note 41 above), 107f. Eckhart’s Sermon 15 is also based on this scriptural text, but the exposition differs in the two works.

⁸⁴ See Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 109, 2–5.

⁸⁵ See Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 110, 71–111, 21.

⁸⁶ See Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 113, 1–114, 20.

⁸⁷ See Augustine, *De vera religione* c. 26 n. 49, (CCSL 32), ed. K.-D. Daur (Turnhout: 1962), 218f., 133–35.

God.⁸⁸ However, the path by stages is as yet a means, and every means is foreign to God. It is in the One that one finds God, and whoever wants to find him must himself become One,⁸⁹ for “‘Ein mensche,’ sprichet unser herre, ‘gienc ûz.’”⁹⁰

Eckhart next concentrates on *homo*. Etymologically, this word points to humility. In a certain sense, the human person has “mit nihte niht gemeine,” and therein lies his nobility.⁹¹ Besides this, the human person naturally strives for knowledge, and in the “morning knowledge” he knows God and the creatures in One.⁹²

The word “knowledge” prompts Eckhart to discuss the problem of whether the blessedness of the human person consists in the vision of God or in the knowledge that he knows God.⁹³ For Eckhart, blessedness is “sô diu sêle schouwet got blôz. Dâ nimet si allez ir wesen und ir leben und schepfet allez daz si ist, von dem grunde gotes und enweiz von wizzenne niht noch von minne noch von nihte alzemâle.”⁹⁴ When, however, the soul knows that it sees and knows God, this is “ein ûzslac und ein widerslac ûf daz êrste” [“a going forth and a returning to the first”]; the spirit becomes conscious of itself and then reflects on the first origin, namely God, who in the act of reflection becomes the object of knowledge, and

⁸⁸ See Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 112, 19–24.

⁸⁹ See Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 114, 21–115, 12.

⁹⁰ Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 115, 6–7 [“‘A man,’ says our Lord, ‘went out.’”]. *Homo quidam abiit*: we should note that Eckhart’s exposition, which concentrates on *ein*, makes sense only with the vernacular version of the scriptural text.

⁹¹ See Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 115, 20–116, 7. In the book of consolation, “mit nihte niht gemeine” [“nothing in common with anything”] is the definition of the intellect, the “oberste kraft der sêle” [“highest power of the soul”] or ground of the soul: see DW V, 29, 2–4.

⁹² See DW V, 116, 8–19.

⁹³ See DW V, 116, 20–27. Eckhart alludes here to the academic discussion “Utrum beatitudo hominis consistat in actu hominis recto aut reflexo.” In 1312/13, Jean de Pouilly had presented this *quaestio* at the University of Paris, and even before him, in 1308/09, Durandus of Saint-Pourçain had discussed this question in his commentary on the *Sentences*. Eckhart takes up this question in his *Commentary on John*, too (In Ioh. n. 108; LW III, 93, 4–8, and In Ioh. n. 673–61, LW III, 587–96 in the exposition of Jn 17:3). See Quint, *Meister Eckhart, Die deutschen Werke V* (n. 41 above), 131–33. More recently, see Thomas Jeschke, *Deus ut tentus uel visus. Die Debatte um die Seligkeit im reflexiven Akt (ca. 1293–1320). Text-edition und Untersuchung*, (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters) 104 (Leiden: 2010).

⁹⁴ Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 116, 29–117, 1 [“that the soul sees God nakedly. Thereby it receives its whole essence and its life. It draws its entire Being from the ground of God; it knows nothing of knowledge or of love; it knows nothing at all of anything whatsoever.”] (Flasch, 109).

is thereby separated from the soul. This corresponds to the statement in the scriptural passage that the noble man returns (*et reverti*). Eckhart once again explains what happens in the case of the eye: with one power it sees, and with another power it knows that it sees. This return to the reflecting self is at the same time a step backwards from the moment that bestows full blessedness, the moment of unity. Eckhart appeals to Scripture to justify these considerations. Blessedness lies in the naked vision of God. “Dar umbe sprichet unser herre herzicliche wol, daz daz êwic leben ist: bekennen got aleine einen wâren got, niht: bekennen, daz man got bekennet.”⁹⁵ The scriptural text underlying the sermon *On the noble man* says that this vision of God is not permanent: “Dar umbe sprichet unser herre gar wol, daz ‘ein edel mensche vuor ûz in ein verrez lant enpfâhen im ein rîche und wider kam.’ Wan der mensche muoz in im selber ein sîn und muoz daz suoehen in im und in einem und nemen in einem: daz ist schouwen got aleine; und ‘herwider komen’ daz ist wizzen und bekennen, daz man got bekennet und weiz.”⁹⁶

As he has already done in the book of consolation, Eckhart shows the reader the divine in human nature, the nobility of the human soul. In the book of consolation, this treasure served to overcome suffering; in the sermon, the noble man has completely turned away from the world and has attained his goal, the vision of God—to the extent that this is attainable in this world.

Eckhart’s *Liber Benedictus* was accused of heresy in the trial before the Inquisition in Cologne. The first list of accusations opens with 15 errors drawn from this text: 13 suspicious affirmations from the book of consolation and two from the sermon “On the noble man.”⁹⁷ This means that accusations were leveled at the first, theoretical part of the book of consolation almost in its entirety. But objectionable material was found in the

⁹⁵ Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 117, 21–23 [“This is why our Lord quite rightly says that this is eternal life: to know God alone as the one and true God—not to know that one knows God.”] (Flasch, 111). This alludes to Jn 17:3, “Haec est vita aeterna, ut cognoscant te solum Deum verum.”

⁹⁶ Meister Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 118, 20–24 [“This is why our Lord says very well: ‘A noble man went out to a distant land to gain a kingdom, and then returned.’ For the human being must be one in himself. And he must seek this in himself and in the One, and he must receive it in the One. This means: he must not see anything other than God alone, but then he must ‘come back,’ which means knowing and recognizing that he recognizes and knows God.”] (Flasch, 113).

⁹⁷ See Sturlese, “Acta Echariana. Secunda pars. Processus contra magistrum Echar-dum” (note 6 above), 198–209.

second part too, such as Eckhart's teaching about sin and true repentance,⁹⁸ which found its way into the papal bull *In agro dominico* as art. 14,⁹⁹ and his low appreciation of external works and ceremonies.¹⁰⁰ Although only one of the 15 propositions was included in the bull of excommunication, 11 further articles of this bull concern important theoretical clusters of ideas from the *Liber Benedictus*, which are attested in *In agro dominico* only by means of other passages from Eckhart's vernacular œuvre.¹⁰¹ This shows both the importance and the explosive quality of the *Liber Benedictus*, which contains the central points of Eckhart's teaching in a concentrated form. It is clear that his contemporaries were aware of this. Under the impact made by the trial, the *Liber Benedictus* found only a very hesitant reception. In addition to the narrow manuscript transmission, the Strasbourg Dominican John of Dambach (c.1288–1372) used excerpts from the *Liber Benedictus* (carefully avoiding all the dogmatically objectionable passages) in his treatise *De consolatione theologiae*, which stands in the tradition from Boethius. We also find one quotation from the *Liber Benedictus* by the Heidelberg theologian John Wenck of Herrenberg (d.1460) in his polemical treatise *De ignota litteratura* against Nicholas of Cusa, and excerpts in the *Opus Ior* of the Augustinian Jordan of Quedlinburg (c.1300–70/80). All of these writers distance themselves from a text that the hierarchical church had classified as problematic.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ This is art. 7 of the list of accusations, which corresponds to *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 22, 5–14; See *Acta Echardiana*, LW V, 203 n. 12.

⁹⁹ See *Acta Echardiana*, n. 65 *In agro dominico*: "Quartusdecimus articulus: 'Bonus homo debet sic conformare voluntatem suam voluntati divinae, quod ipse velit quicquid deus vult. Quia deus vult aliquo modo me peccasse, nollem ego quod ego peccata non commissem. Et hec est vera penitentia.'" (LW V, 598, 56–59).

¹⁰⁰ This is art. 11 of the list of accusations, which corresponds to *Liber Benedictus*, DW V, 38, 3–16; see *Acta Echardiana*, LW V, 206 n. 19.

¹⁰¹ On this entire complex, see Flasch, *Meister Eckhart. Das Buch der göttlichen Tröstung* (note 41 above), 142–44.

¹⁰² On the reception, see Quint, *Meister Eckhart, Die deutschen Werke V* (note 41 above), 1 and 5–6; Sturlese, "Acta Echardiana. Secunda pars. Processus contra magistrum Echardum" (note 6 above), 198–209, printing the excerpts by Jordan of Quedlinburg in the critical apparatus, as well as Sturlese, "Die Kölner Eckhartisten. Das Studium generale der deutschen Dominikaner und die Verurteilung der Thesen Meister Eckharts," in *Homo divinus* (note 37 above), 119–35, see 133. On Jordan, see Jordan of Quedlinburg, *Opus Postillarum et Sermorum de Evangelii dominicalibus. De nativitate Domini. Opus Ior, Sermones selecti de filiatione divina*, ed. Nadia Bray (Hamburg: 2008). The *Index auctoritatum* lists those passages from Meister Eckhart's Apologia/Defense (*Responsio*) that contain passages from the *Liber Benedictus*.

3.3 *Eckhart's German Sermons*¹⁰³

Eckhart's Latin sermons are found in a clearly defined corpus,¹⁰⁴ but no comparable collection of his German sermons has survived in the transmission. Traditionally, scholars have concentrated on the problem of proofs of authenticity, and have sought to filter out of the scattered transmission those texts that can definitely be ascribed to Eckhart (see section 1 above, and the remarks in section 2 about the consequences for the edition). At the same time, the attempt has been made to draw up a chronological framework for Eckhart's sermons, concentrating on Erfurt, Strasbourg, and Cologne, with special interest in the Rhineland.¹⁰⁵ Scholars past and present have spoken of Eckhart's "Strasbourg decade,"¹⁰⁶ and have located his vernacular preaching activity in the context of the pastoral care of nuns.¹⁰⁷ Another central problem was the elaboration of a model of how

¹⁰³ Commentaries and further bibliography to the sermons by Eckhart edited in the volumes DW I–III of the Stuttgart collected edition will be found in: Meister Eckhart, *Werke* I. Texts and translations by Josef Quint, edited with a commentary by Niklaus Largier (Frankfurt am Main: 1993). Selected sermons in Georg Steer and Loris Sturlese, *Lectura Eckhardi. Predigten Meister Eckhards von Fachgelehrten gelesen und gedeutet* 1, (Stuttgart: 1998; 2, Stuttgart: 2003; 3, Stuttgart: 2009). For a comprehensive presentation of Eckhart's sermon oeuvre, see Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik* 3 (note 12 above), 323–53.

¹⁰⁴ See Codex Cusanus 21, fol. 137r–166; on the manuscript, see Josef Koch, *Meister Eckhart, Die lateinischen Werke IV: Magistri Eckhardi Sermones*, ed. Ernst Benz, Bruno Decker, and Joseph Koch (Stuttgart: 1956), xiii–xxiii.

¹⁰⁵ See Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik* 3 (note 12 above), 323–53: "Der Prediger am Ober- und Niederrhein." Ruh distinguishes one phase of early preaching in Erfurt from a phase during Eckhart's activity in Strasbourg and Cologne, and states that the second phase involves "the majority of the sermons which have survived" (324); see the critical remarks by Freimut Löser, "Was sind Meister Eckharts deutsche Straßburger Predigten?" in *Meister Eckharts Straßburger Jahrzehnt* (note 61 above), 37–63. Steer attempts, on the basis of cross-references and parallels to the more accurately datable Latin oeuvre, to establish a relative chronology for Eckhart's German sermons: see Steer, "Meister Eckharts deutsche *reden* und *predigten* in seiner Erfurter Zeit," in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt* (note 27 above), 41.

¹⁰⁶ See *Meister Eckhart Straßburger Jahrzehnt* (note 61 above).

¹⁰⁷ In 1286, the then Dominican provincial of Teutonia, Hermann of Minden, issued an ordinance that asked the brethren, and especially "fratres docti," to provide pastoral care to the incorporated convents of Dominican nuns (*cura monialium*). In the wake of Denifle's studies, there has arisen the conviction that Eckhart's characteristic way of preaching developed from his obligation to the *cura monialium*; Germanists have concentrated on the literary interplay between the Dominican sermon and the mystical spirituality of the sisters. For an outline of the history of research into this problem, see Loris Sturlese, "Meister Eckhart und die *cura monialium*: Kritische Anmerkungen zu einem forschungsgeschichtlichen Mythos," in *Meister Eckharts Straßburger Jahrzehnt* (note 61 above), 1–16, see 1–5.

we are to understand the history of reception, from the oral address in the pulpit to the fixed written sermon that was intended to be read.¹⁰⁸

Recently, this approach to the interpretation of the texts has been called into question. Loris Sturlese has shown that it is not possible to document historically any link between Eckhart's preaching activity and the *cura monialium* in convents of Dominican sisters in the Rhineland, and that there existed a corpus of vernacular sermons which had a structure analogous to the Latin *Opus sermonum*.

Eckhart's so-called "Strasbourg decade"¹⁰⁹ is based on two documents which attest Eckhart's presence as witness to a donation in 1314 and 1316 in Strasbourg, and his visitation of the convent of Dominican nuns at Unterlinden in Colmar in the fall of 1322.¹¹⁰ These are isolated activities of a Dominican who belonged to the governing elite of his order and was entrusted with administrative tasks. There are no sources which would give any kind of information about Eckhart's supervisory function in relation to women's religious communities in Alsace, still less about his preaching activity in these convents. Naturally, Eckhart preached. As a *frater ordinis praedicatorum*, this was his proper and most important task, and the large number of surviving sermons, mostly in the vernacular, show how seriously Eckhart took this task. But in the absence of evidence to the contrary, we must assume that Eckhart, like every Dominican, preached in public in the church of his order—and that means, in the vernacular—in the presence of his confreres and of the urban population.¹¹¹ The sermon

¹⁰⁸ The basic study is Paul-Gerhard Völker, "Die Überlieferungsformen mittelalterlicher deutscher Predigten," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 92 (1963), 212–27. In a brief overview, Ruh distinguishes sermons written down by the preacher himself (traditionally, it is held that Eckhart did this only in the case of the sermon *On the noble man*); texts written by another hand, but edited by the preacher; transcripts written down by the hearers from memory (*reportatio*); and German texts (not composed by the preacher himself) based on written Latin sermons. See Kurt Ruh, "Deutsche Predigtbücher des Mittelalters," in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Predigt*, ed. Heimo Reinitzer (Hamburg: 1981), reprinted in Kurt Ruh, *Kleine Schriften* 2 (note 23 above), 296–317, see 298.

¹⁰⁹ After his second period as *magister* in Paris (1311–13), Eckhart did not return to Erfurt. His presence in Strasbourg is attested for the first time in 1314. In 1324, he was called to teach at the studium generale of the Dominicans in Cologne, and the Inquisition began proceedings against him there in 1326. On the basis of the two dates of 1314 and 1324, scholars have constructed a ten-year residence of Eckhart in Strasbourg, attending to the *cura monialium* in the women's religious communities there.

¹¹⁰ See *Acta Echardiana* (note 6 above), n. 38–40; LW V, 182–87; see Sturlese, "Meister Eckhart und die *cura monialium*" (note 107 above), 6–13.

¹¹¹ Eckhart explicitly mentions the place where he is preaching only twice (an argument in favor of the exceptional character of such preaching): the convent of Benedictine nuns dedicated to the Holy Maccabees (cross-reference in Pr. 14 to Pr. 15; cross-reference in

is integrated into the liturgy of the Mass, and its subject is dictated by the scriptural readings of that day in the liturgical calendar. Accordingly, Eckhart repeated again and again the annual liturgical cycle. He began with this in Erfurt and preached until the opening of the trial before the Inquisition in Cologne in 1326. It is natural to assume that Eckhart kept the sermons that he had preached, since they could be used again and again. And this brings us to the second point: the question of whether a corpus of German sermons existed.¹¹²

Collections of sermons are customarily arranged according to the liturgical year, which keeps the movable feasts of the church's year in the first part (*de tempore*) from Advent to Pentecost, and the second part (*de sanctis*) from Trinity Sunday to the first Sunday in Advent in the following year keeps the feasts of the saints on the day of each patron. This is how Eckhart arranged his Latin collection of the *Opus sermonum*. The Latin sermons are drafts that Eckhart continually revised and expanded. They are transmitted to us complete and in their original order only in Codex Cusanus 21.¹¹³ We have no comparable textual witness to the German sermons, but there is no reason to assume that Eckhart treated them any differently, especially since we possess a clear reflection of the German corpus in the sermon collection *Paradisus anime intelligentis*.

The collection *Paradisus anime intelligentis*, with the German title *Paradis der fornuftigen sele*,¹¹⁴ is transmitted in its entirety in two manuscripts from the mid-14th century.¹¹⁵ It contains 64 German sermons, half of which (i.e. 32 texts) are from Meister Eckhart; the others were written by other authors, mostly Dominicans. The sermons are presented alternately, so that a kind of counterpoint between Eckhart and the other authors is created—although the large number of texts from his pen clearly shows that

Pr. 22 to Pr. 12), and the convent of Cistercian nuns in Mariengarten (cross-reference in Pr. 13 and 14 to Pr. 22) in Cologne; see Sturlese, "Meister Eckhart und die *cura monialium*" (note 107 above), 13, and Löser, "Was sind Meister Eckharts deutsche Straßburger Predigten?" (note 105 above), 38–41.

¹¹² See Sturlese, "Hat es ein Corpus der deutschen Predigten Meister Eckharts gegeben?" (note 26 above).

¹¹³ For a precise analysis of this manuscript, see Koch, *Meister Eckhart, Die lateinischen Werke* IV (note 104 above), xiii–xxiii.

¹¹⁴ See *Paradisus anime intelligentis* (*Paradis der fornuftigen sele*), ed. Philipp Strauch, 2nd edition edited by Niklaus Largier and Gilbert Fournier (Berlin: 1998) (reproduces the 1919 Berlin edition), with further bibliography. See also Burkhard Hasebrink, Nigel F. Palmer, and Hans-Jochen Schiewer (eds.), "*Paradisus anime intelligentis*." *Studien zu einer dominikanischen Predigtsammlung aus dem Umkreis Meister Eckharts* (Tübingen: 2009).

¹¹⁵ Codices Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud. misc. 479, and Hamburg, Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek, cod. Theol. 2057.

Eckhart is the protagonist of the collection. The structure of the *Paradisus* is instructive. It is divided into two parts: the first 31 sermons belong to *de tempore*, the other 33 to *de sanctis*. Sturlese has demonstrated “that at least the first part of the *Paradisus*, i.e. the church year, was conceived and drawn up with conscious strictness and consistency in accordance with the customary liturgical order—and that this is true of Eckhart’s sermons.”¹¹⁶ This in turn means that the collector of the *Paradisus* must have made use of a liturgically structured collection of the German sermons of Meister Eckhart, so that “as early as the 1330’s, there existed a corpus of German sermons by Eckhart, which displayed at the very least a very well structured *temporale*.”¹¹⁷ We know today that Eckhart kept a copy of the *Opus tripartitum* with him, and that he worked intensively on this text for many years; similarly, he had a notebook containing outlines of the *Opus sermonum*. We should assume that a similar notebook with outlines of German sermons existed. He speaks twice of “mîn buoch” [“my book”], in which he noted down important thoughts.¹¹⁸ He can only have meant the notebook with outlines of the German sermons.

Unfortunately, the *Paradisus anime intelligentis* transmits Eckhart’s sermons not in their authentic form, but in an edited version.¹¹⁹ In other words, this is a document of the reception of Eckhart. There is as yet no scholarly consensus about the provenance and the goal of the collection. Ruh suggests that it was put together in Erfurt, and he sees the *Paradisus* as a kind of commemorative book of the Dominican monastery in that city, which desired, around 1340, to document the golden age of the house,

¹¹⁶ Sturlese, “Hat es ein Corpus der deutschen Predigten Meister Eckharts gegeben?” (note 26 above), 398.

¹¹⁷ Sturlese, “Hat es ein Corpus der deutschen Predigten Meister Eckharts gegeben?” (note 26 above), 401. In 1341, Nicholas of Landau quotes from the *Paradisus* collection in his *Sermones novi*. Steer, however, thinks rather of “copies of sermons by Eckhart which were in circulation, and were available in small anthologies together with sermons of other, anonymous authors”: Georg Steer, “Die dominikanische Predigtsammlung *Paradisus anime intelligentis*. Überlieferung, Werkform und Textgestalt,” in “*Paradisus anime intelligentis*” (note 114 above), 17–67. See 42.

¹¹⁸ See Meister Eckhart, Pr. 14, DW I, 237, 8; and Pr. 28, DW II, 62, 3.

¹¹⁹ The title and the formulation of the sermon titles in the index (which precedes the text) are probably the work of the collector himself. The Eckhart anthology which served as the basis for the *Paradisus* collection was certainly more extensive, both with regard to the number of sermons and with regard to the length of their texts. The editor abbreviated and omitted passages that were objectionable on dogmatic grounds, and eliminated cross-references that were meaningful only in the total corpus. This was already argued by Quint and Ruh; for details, see Steer, “Die dominikanische Predigtsammlung” (note 117 above), 53 and 35–37.

as this was mirrored in the personalities of important preachers.¹²⁰ Steer¹²¹ and Sturlese¹²² entertain the possibility of a provenance in Cologne in the circle of the “Eckhartists,” with the aim of rehabilitating Meister Eckhart. The collection has both a representative and a thematic character, and this theme is already indicated in the title, namely, the precedence taken by the intellect (*anima intelligens*/“fornuftige sele”) as the highest power of the soul, with regard to the vision of God which makes human beings blessed, over the *caritas* or *voluntas*, the love of God directed by the will. This reflects the learned debate between the intellectualist Dominican doctrine and the voluntarist Franciscan doctrine, a debate in which Eckhart himself had taken part in Paris.¹²³ It is above all the demanding content of the “key sermon”¹²⁴ of the *Paradisus*, Eckhart’s sermon *Quasi stella matutina*, which evokes the learned disputations of university teaching. It is obviously addressed to a public that was very familiar with these topics—thus contradicting the idea that Eckhart preached exclusively for uneducated, simple laypersons and for nuns.¹²⁵ It is certainly the case that he did not abstain even in the presence of the *simplices* from the *subtilia*

¹²⁰ See Kurt Ruh, “‘Paradisus anime intelligentis’ (‘Paradis der fornuftigen sele’),” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 7, ed. Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1989), 298–303.

¹²¹ See Georg Steer, “Geistliche Prosa,” in *Die deutsche Literatur im späten Mittelalter, 1250–1370, 2: Reimpaargedichte, Drama, Prosa*, ed. Ingeborg Glier (Munich: 1987), 306–70, see 329–32.

¹²² See Loris Sturlese, “Die Kölner Eckhartisten. Das Studium generale der deutschen Dominikaner und die Verurteilung der Thesen Meister Eckharts,” in *Homo divinus* (note 37 above), 119–35, esp. 132.

¹²³ See Ruh, *Meister Eckhart* (note 14 above), 62–63. In the transmission of the *Paradisus* collection, as this is found in the Oxford manuscript (which probably comes from the Frankfurt region), this learned scholarly interest in the reception can also be seen in the texts which accompany the transmission; see Nigel F. Palmer, “In kaffin in got. Zur Rezeption des ‘Paradisus anime intelligentis’ in der Oxforder Handschrift Ms. Laud Misc. 479,” in “*Paradisus anime intelligentis*” (note 114 above), 69–131, see 89–95. Burkhard Hasebrink, “Dialog der Varianten. Untersuchungen zur Textdifferenz der Eckhartpredigten aus dem ‘Paradisus anime intelligentis,’” in “*Paradisus anime intelligentis*,” 133–82 gives interesting details about the intention which guided the editor of the *Paradisus* in his work. He accentuates the debate within the Dominican order by means of deliberate textual interventions.

¹²⁴ Par. an. 33 = Meister Eckhart, Pr. 9; DW I, 138–58. This is the only sermon in the *Paradisus* collection which contains propositions that were condemned as heretical; see Loris Sturlese (ed.), *Magistri Echaridi Responsio* (note 7 above), 348, nn. 127–28 and 599: Secundus articulus of the appendix to the bull *In agro dominico*.

¹²⁵ See Ruh, *Meister Eckhart* (note 14 above), 70–71. On Pr. 9 (*Quasi stella matutina*), see Ruh, *Meister Eckhart*, 63–71; Meister Eckhart, *Werke* I. Texts and translations by Josef Quint, edited with a commentary by Niklaus Largier (Frankfurt am Main: 1993), 104–17 (text and translation), 834–55 (commentary and further bibliography).

of the theological-philosophical debates—and ultimately, it was this that sealed his fate.¹²⁶

Eckhart's fame and popularity were due to his German sermons; but it was also these German sermons that caused his trial by the Inquisition on suspicion of heresy, as well as the condemnation of central points of his teaching.¹²⁷ As Eckhart himself says, his discourses always circle around the same basic themes:

Swenne ich predige, sô pflige ich ze sprechene von abegescheidenheit und daz der mensche ledic werde sîn selbes und aller dinge. Ze dem andern mâle, daz man wider ingebildet werde in daz einvaltige guot, daz got ist. Ze dem dritten mâle, daz man gedenke der grôzen edelkeit, die got an die sêle hât geleet, daz der mensche dâ mite kome in ein wunder ze gote. Ze dem vierden mâle von götlicher natûre lûterkeit—waz klârheit an götlicher natûre sî, daz ist unsprechelich. Got ist ein wort, ein ungesprochen wort.¹²⁸

Eckhart's first topic is *Abgeschiedenheit* ("detachment"), which runs through his vernacular œuvre from the Erfurt *Discourses* onwards under the key words *Gelassenheit* and "internal poverty." His second great topic is the return into the primal divine ground and becoming one with this, the "birth of God" in the human soul. Thirdly, Eckhart speaks of the nobility of the soul and of its marvelous affinity to God, which is expressed conceptually in the "ground of the soul," in the *scintilla*, in the "something" of the soul. Eckhart's last topic concerns the unutterable nature of God,

¹²⁶ The principal accusation of the papal bull is that Eckhart had confused the simple people in their faith through his sermons; see *Acta Echardiana* n. 65 (bull *In agro dominico*), LW V, 97, 15–17: "dogmatizavit multa fidem veram in cordibus multorum obnubilantia, que docuit quam maxime coram vulgo simplici in suis predicationibus, que etiam redegit in scriptis." The warning of the general of the Dominican order at the general chapter in Toulouse in 1328 is completely in accordance with this: the preachers are instructed to pay very exact attention to their formulations: "Cum ex eo quod aliqui in predicationibus ad populum conantur tractare quedam subtilia, que non solum ad mores non proficient, quinimo facilius ducunt populum in errorem...;" see *Acta Echardiana* n. 63 (General Chapter in Toulouse: Pentecost 1328), LW V, 594, 2–4.

¹²⁷ Eckhart himself declares in his Apologia/Defense that his high prestige among the people has provoked the envy of his accusers; see *Acta Echardiana* no. 48 (*Responsio*), LW V, 275, 19–21.

¹²⁸ Meister Eckhart, Pr. 53; DW II, 528, 5–529, 2 ["When I preach, I am accustomed to speak about *Abgeschiedenheit*, and to say that the human person must become empty of himself and of all things. Secondly, that one should be once again 'formed into' the simple good which God is. Thirdly, that one should bear in mind the great nobility which God has laid down in the soul, so that the human person may thereby come to God in a marvelous way. Fourthly, about the purity of the divine nature—it is impossible to say what splendor there is in the divine nature. God is a word, an unspoken word."]

which is expressed in the traditional formulae of the Logos theology and is gloriously celebrated in the linguistic virtuosity that is typical of Eckhart.

All four topics have already been raised in the texts by Eckhart that have been discussed above. We shall look briefly at texts which are representative of his preaching oeuvre: the group of sermons about the eternal birth, from the beginning of his preaching activity, and the celebrated sermon about poverty from the end of his career, which encapsulates the essence of Eckhart's teaching.

3.3.1 *Sermons 101–104: On the Eternal Birth*¹²⁹

In the sermon cycle on the eternal birth, Eckhart elaborates in all its breadth the theme of the birth of God in the soul. These four sermons are always transmitted as a group.¹³⁰ Their structure follows the pattern of question and answer, which is also found in the *Discourses of Instruction*, and thus resembles the *collatio*. Not only the structure, but also the linguistic and stylistic agreements, even down to the choice of vocabulary, demonstrate the closeness of these two works. In terms of content, the teaching about the eternal birth finds support in Eckhart's Latin oeuvre, especially in the *Sermones et Lectiones super Ecclesiastici* ch. 24, 23–31 and in the *Commentary on the Book of Wisdom*. Steer suggests that the cycle was written "roughly in the period between 1298 and 1305," that is, during or after Eckhart's first period as *magister* in Paris (1302/03).¹³¹ Like the *Discourses*, the cycle about the eternal birth is addressed to Eckhart's confreres in his own order, hearers who have training in spiritual matters and a good knowledge of theology. The entire cycle is "gesaget gelêrten und erliuhteten liuten, die von gote und von der geschrift gelêret und erliuhtet sint."¹³²

Liturgically, the four sermons are grouped around *Epiphania Domini*. Pr. 103 and 104 refer to the same Sunday Gospel and expound successive

¹²⁹ Critical edition of Pr. 101–104 in *Meister Eckhart, Die deutschen Werke* IV/1, ed. Georg Steer (Stuttgart: 2003), 279–610. Commentaries: Georg Steer, "Predigt 101 'Dum medium silentium tenerent omnia,'" in *Lectura Eckhardi* 1 (note 103 above), 247–88; Steer, "Meister Eckharts Predigtzyklus" (n. 35 above).

¹³⁰ See the superscription to Pr. 101 in Mainz, Stadtbibliothek, Cod. 221 (written in 1454), fol. 118r: "Her nach volgent vyer predigen von der ewygen gebort dye zitlich worden ist vnd noch tegelich geborin wirt in der selen grunde. Amen." ["There follow here four sermons about the eternal birth which has become temporal, and which is still born daily in the ground of the soul. Amen."] (DW IV/1, 334).

¹³¹ See Steer, "Meister Eckharts Predigtzyklus" (note 35 above), 276.

¹³² Meister Eckhart, Pr. 104; DW IV/1, 607, 520–22.

texts from this.¹³³ Pr. 101 opens up the theme of the eternal birth by means of three questions: where does this birth take place, what now should the relationship of the human person to it be, and what benefit does it contain for him?¹³⁴ Pr. 102 takes up the first question of Pr. 101—"Where?"—and discusses it in greater depth. Pr. 103 takes up the second question of Pr. 101—"How?"—and points to the love which makes God completely one's own. Pr. 104 states that only the Father brings about this birth, and formulates a conclusion that applies to the cycle as a whole.¹³⁵

According to Eckhart, the birth of God takes place in the innermost and most hidden realm of the soul, in its "ground," where "daz mittel swîgen" is (Pr. 101, DW IV/1, 345, 50) (i.e. where there is no intermediary that could create a link *ad extra* to the powers of the soul). This can take place only in the soul of the human being, since only the soul is formed "natiurlîche nâch gote" (Pr. 102, DW IV/1, 410, 14). Here, in the innermost realm where the soul is completely empty and free of all images and concepts, God in his totality ("mit sînem allem," Pr. 101, DW IV/1, 345, 53) enters in and gives birth to his Son eternally in perfect self-knowledge. The human being is to keep silent and to allow God to work in himself, in total self-forgetfulness (like Paul: see 2 Cor. 12:2–4). The soul cannot comprehend what God does without images in the ground of the soul. It knows that it is but not how or what it is. This "unknowing," which is an act of knowing "super-formed" by the divine act of knowing (Pr. 102, DW IV/1, 420, 132), impels it to pursue constantly after knowledge. The birth of God cannot be influenced by ideas directed by the reason. God alone brings it about, and the human person must suffer it (Pr. 103, DW IV/1, 476, 23). To be completely still is even better than performing works of virtue. God makes the human person ready, and where he finds him ready, God must act and pour himself into the human person (Pr. 103, DW IV/1, 485, 99–486, 106). Thus, the birth of God takes place in the completely detached human being, who has denied himself and thereby follows Christ. In this state, works of penance

¹³³ Pr. 101: *Dominica infra Octavam Nativitatis*, Introit: *Dum medium silentium tenerent omnia* (Wis. 18:14); Pr. 102: *In Epiphania Domini*, Gospel: *Ubi est qui natus est rex Iudaeorum?* (Matt. 2:2); Pr. 103: *Dominica infra Octavam Epiphaniae*, Gospel: *Cum factus esset Iesus annorum duodecim* (Lk. 2:42); Pr. 104: *Dominica infra Octavam Epiphaniae*, Gospel: *Nesciebatis quia in his quae Patris mei sunt, oportet me esse?* (Lk. 2:49).

¹³⁴ See the *introductio* to Pr. 101, which sets out the structure of the sermon: DW IV/1, 338, 11–341, 32.

¹³⁵ See Steer, "Echtheit des Predigtzyklus," in *Meister Eckhart, Die deutschen Werke* IV/1, ed. Steer (note 129 above), 318–29, see 324f.

are not important; the smallest work of love for one's fellow human being is more pleasing to God.

In the context of his teaching about the birth of God, Eckhart has recourse to his theorem about *Abgeschiedenheit*, but he also offers a new interpretation of the relationship between the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa*. He appeals to Thomas Aquinas for support of his thesis that the active life is higher than the contemplative life. Eckhart sees contemplation and action as a unity: both come from the "ground," from God (Pr. 104, DW IV/1, 578, 149–584, 209). As in the natural human being the *intellectus agens* strips the images of all that is external and material and brings them into the "līdende vernunft" (Pr. 104, DW IV/1, 586, 228), so in the detached human person God takes the place of the *intellectus agens* and gives birth to himself in the "suffering reason": here, it is God who is the "werkmeister" ["master workman"] (Pr. 104, DW IV/1, 589, 247). In God, the human being can do all things. In this true interiority, he can do without exercises in virtue. The only thing that matters is what brings him near to God (Pr. 104, DW IV/1, 607, 532–36).

4. PR. 52: *BEATI PAUPERES SPIRITU*¹³⁶

Eckhart's "sermon on poverty" is his most widely received and discussed sermon.¹³⁷ His teaching and his mastery of language crystallize here to

¹³⁶ Critical edition of Pr. 52 in *Meister Eckhart, Die deutschen Werke* II, ed. Josef Quint (Stuttgart: 1971), 478–524. Commentaries: Meister Eckhart, *Werke* I. Texts and translations by Josef Quint, edited with a commentary by Niklaus Largier, (Frankfurt am Main: 1993), 550–63 (text and translation), 1050–60 (commentary and further bibliography; Ruh, *Meister Eckhart* (note 14 above), 157–65; Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik* 3 (note 12 above), 343–47; Kurt Flasch, "Predigt Nr. 52 'Beati pauperes spiritu,'" in *Lectura Eckhardi* 1 (note 103 above), 163–99 with a new edition of the text by Georg Steer and translation by Kurt Flasch; Freimut Löser, "Der niht enwil und niht enweiz un niht enhât. Drei übersehene Texte Meister Eckharts zur Armutslehre," in *Contemplata aliis tradere*, ed. Claudia Brinken et al. (Bern: 1995), 391–439.

¹³⁷ This sermon is transmitted in 12 manuscripts, including a Latin translation, and in the 1521 Basel printed edition of Tauler; it is not ascribed to Eckhart. In their statements against the "heretic" Eckhart, Jan van Ruusbroec and Jan van Leeuwen quote from Pr. 52; see Quint, DW II, 482–83; Ruh, *Meister Eckhart* (note 14 above), 164; Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik* 4: *Die niederländische Mystik des 14. bis 16. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: 1999), 40f. and passim; Rijkert A. Ubbink, *De receptie van Meister Eckhart in de Nederlandse gedurende de middeleeuwen. Een studie op basis van middelnederlandse handschriften* (Amsterdam: 1978), 225–40. Eckhart's teaching about poverty enters the so-called Eckhart legends in *exempla* cast in dialogue form. In the 16th century, Valentin Weigel and Pelgrim Pullen made use of Pr. 52 for their own works; see Quint, DW II, 483, and Ruh, *Meister Eckhart*, 164–65. Some textual witnesses to Pr. 52 contain a foreword in dialogue form,

form a literary and doctrinal highpoint. The text attracted considerable attention, but it is not mentioned in the Inquisition's list of accusations. The conclusion has been drawn that those who denounced Eckhart did not have access to this sermon, since it was written only at a later date.¹³⁸

The biblical text of the sermon is the first Beatitude in the reading from Matthew's Gospel for 1 November (All Saints): "Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum" (Matt. 5:3). Eckhart at once distinguishes between two forms of poverty: an external poverty, which is certainly worthy of praise,¹³⁹ and an internal poverty. The Lord's words refer to the latter, and the sermon which follows will speak only of this kind of poverty.

Eckhart begins by setting out the structure (*dispositio*) of his sermon, which takes as its starting point a definition of the "poor man" which diverges from that of Albert the Great:

Bischof Albrecht sprichet, daz daz sî ein arm mensche, der kein genüegede enhât von allen den dingen, diu got ie geschuof,—und diz ist wol gesprochen. Mêr: wir sprechen noch baz und nemen armuot in einer hœhern wîse: daz ist ein arm mensche, der niht enwil und niht enweiz und niht enhât.¹⁴⁰

which agrees with the Pseudo-Eckhartian Treatise IV "Vom adel der sêle." The anonymous author of this text clearly borrows from Pr. 52; see Quint, DW II, 479–81, and Kurt Ruh, "Von dem adel der sêle," in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 11, ed. Ruh et al. (Berlin: 2004), 16–18. Formulaic phrases from Pr. 52 are found in the Pseudo-Eckhartian Treatises XIV and XV; see Gottschall, ch. 10.1: "Eckhart and the Vernacular Tradition: Pseudo-Eckhart and Eckhart Legends."

¹³⁸ See Ruh, *Meister Eckhart* (note 14 above), 157–58; Ruh still assumes here that the Latin marginal note about the "true poverty" on fol. 57rb of the *Apologia/Defense (Responsio)* refers to a draft of the "sermon on poverty." The *Apologia/Defense* was submitted on 26 September 1326. This would mean that Eckhart's Sermon 52 reached its final formulation only in 1326/27. Today's scholarship has distanced itself from this interpretation; see Steer, "Meister Eckharts deutsche *reden* und *predigten* in seiner Erfurter Zeit," in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt* (note 27 above), 37. The Latin marginal note in the *Apologia/Defense* remains interesting: although it does not contain any quotations from Eckhart, it can be understood as reflecting a reading of the "sermon on poverty." With this one would appear to have a further indication for the wide reception of this text. The marginal note is printed in *Acta Ehardiana*, Appendix II: Facsimile edition of the manuscript Soest, Stadtarchiv und Wissenschaftliche Stadtbibliothek, Cod. No. 33, fol. 45–28; LW V, 503.

¹³⁹ The virulent "theoretical" controversy about poverty between the Franciscan order and the curia broke out in the 1320s: see Ruh, *Meister Eckhart* (note 14 above), 159. The sermon thus implicitly touches on problems of which the contemporary hearers were aware.

¹⁴⁰ Meister Eckhart, Pr. 52; *Lectura Eckhardi* 1 (note 103 above), 168, 21–24 ["Bishop Albert teaches that a poor man is one who finds no satisfaction in all that God has ever created. That is well said. But beyond that: I say it better and take 'poverty' in a higher sense: a poor man is one who does not want, does not know and who does not have."]

This definition consists of three points—"not wanting," "not knowing," and "not having"¹⁴¹—which will be discussed in what follows. The sermon is important to Eckhart. In an emphatic apostrophe, he urges his hearers/readers to become like the truth that he will preach, since only the one who becomes like the truth can understand the truth. This appeal twice frames the exposition, and he closes with a word of consolation for those who will not understand.¹⁴²

The main body of the sermon is dedicated to the three points of the definition of poverty.

First, "daz ist ein arm mensche, der niht enwil." People who busy themselves with external penitential exercises adopt this definition, but they understand it wrongly, since they declare that the human being may not fulfill his own will in any situation (i.e. he must want "nothing"); rather, he must live in such a way that he always fulfills the will of God. As Eckhart sees it, these people are indeed full of good intentions, but essentially they are asses who understand nothing of the divine truth. Eckhart interprets this definition to mean that the human being ought to cease to want (i.e. he must not want), since as long as one still wants to fulfill the will of God, one still possesses one's own will. But one who is truly poor "sol <...> sînes geschaffenen willen alsô ledic stân, als er tete, dô er niht enwas. Wan ich sage iu bî der êwigen wârheit: als lange als ir willen hât, ze ervûllenne den willen gotes, und bergerunge hât der êwicheit und gotes, als lange ensît ir niht arm."¹⁴³ Eckhart demands the total renunciation of willing, and the return into the pre-creaturely state of unity with God, who in this primal

¹⁴¹ Middle High German *niht* is both the neutral substantive indefinite pronoun ("nothing") and the adverbial accusative of the same, which has been used as a negating particle since Late Old High German ("not"; originally "in no way"). I agree with Kurt Ruh in understanding Eckhart's *niht* in the most radical way as a negating particle, although Eckhart is naturally aware of the ambiguity and doubtless also deliberately employs it.

¹⁴² Meister Eckhart, Pr. 52: "Nû bite ich iuch, daz ir alsô sît, daz ir verstât dise rede; wan ich sage iu bî der êwigen wârheit: ir ensît glich der wârheit, von der wir nû sprechen wellen, sô ensult ir mich nicht verstân... Und ich bite iuch umbe die minne gotes, daz ir verstât dise wârheit, ob ir kûnnet; und enverstât ir sie niht, sô enbekûmbert iuch dâ mite niht, wan ich wil sprechen von sô getâner wârheit, die lûzel guoter liute verstân suln": *Lectura Eckhardi* 1 (note 103 above), 168, 16–18 and 25–28. ["Now I beseech you that you be such that you would understand this teaching. For I say to you, by the eternal truth: If you do not become like the truth about which we now wish to speak, then you will not understand me... and for the sake of the love of God I beseech you that you would understand this truth, if you can. And if you do not understand it, then do not worry about this, for I wish to speak of a truth which is such that only a few even of good persons will understand it."]

¹⁴³ Meister Eckhart, Pr. 52; *Lectura Eckhardi* 1 (note 103 above), 170, 23–26 ["...ought to be completely detached from his created will, just as at the time when he did not yet exist.

state is not God, since he is not distinct from the soul (cf. n. 40 above). Accordingly, the highest goal is to free oneself from God: "Her umbe sô biten wir got, daz wir gotes quît werden."¹⁴⁴ And Eckhart concludes his definition of poverty as follows: "Alsô sprechen wir: sol der mensche arm sîn von willen, sô muoz er als lützel wellen und begern, als er wolte und begerte, dô er niht enwas. Und in dirre wîse ist der mensche arm, der niht enwil."¹⁴⁵

Secondly, "daz ist ein arm mensche, der niht enweiz." The same detachment and separation from every object that could be an object of the will, applies also to every object of the act of knowing. With regard to knowledge and knowing too, the human being must return into the pre-creaturely state in order to be truly "poor." "Alsô sprechen wir, daz der mensche alsô ledic sol stân sînes eigenen wizzenes, als er tete, dô er niht enwas, und lâze got wûrken, waz er welle, und stâ der mensche ledic."¹⁴⁶ To know and to love are in accordance with the nature of the human person. Here, once again, the question arises whether knowledge or love has the precedence in relation to the vision of God that makes one blessed. Eckhart discusses every possible position,¹⁴⁷ and rejects them all, in order

For I say to you, by the eternal truth: as long as you have the will to fulfill the will of God, and as long as you have a yearning for eternity and for God, you are not poor."

¹⁴⁴ Meister Eckhart, Pr. 52; *Lectura Eckhardi* 1 (note 103 above), 172, 16 ["Therefore I ask God that I may be detached from God"]. Eckhart's definition of poverty as the complete renunciation of one's will corresponds to the concept in the *Miroir des simples âmes* of Marguerite Porete, who declares in ch. 12 that "the destroyed soul has no longer any will, nor can it have a will, nor does it want to have one." It is impossible to overlook the link between the *Miroir* and Eckhart's sermon on poverty; see Ruh, *Meister Eckhart* (note 14 above), 95–105, see 103; Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik* 3 (note 12 above), 341; and Ruh, "Meister Eckhart und die Spiritualität der Beginen," *Perspektiven der Philosophie. Neues Jahrbuch* 8 (1982), reprinted in Ruh, *Kleine Schriften* 2 (note 23 above), 327–36.

¹⁴⁵ Meister Eckhart, Pr. 52; *Lectura Eckhardi* 1 (note 103 above), 172, 19–21. ["This is why I maintain: if the human being is to be poor in terms of his will, then he may want and desire as little as he wanted and desired at the time when he did not exist. And it is in this sense that the person who does not want anything is poor."] The appeal to the pre-creaturely existence of the human person as an idea in the divine ground of Being runs through the entire oeuvre of Eckhart. In vernacular texts, "to be as one was, when one did not yet exist" is taken up as a kind of "formula" that establishes the contact to Eckhart: see Quint, *DW II*, 509–10, n. 22.

¹⁴⁶ Meister Eckhart, Pr. 52; *Lectura Eckhardi* 1 (note 103 above), 172, 30–32. ["In this sense, I affirm that the human being should be detached from his own knowledge, just as he was when he did not exist. Let him allow God to work as God wants. The human being should be detached."]

¹⁴⁷ See Meister Eckhart, Pr. 52; *Lectura Eckhardi* 1 (note 103 above), 174, 2–4: "Nû ist ein vräge, war ane sælicheit allermeist lige. Etliche meister sprechent, daz si lige an minnenne; andere sprechent si lige an bekennenne und an minnenne, und die sprechent baz." ["Now the question arises: In which of the two does blessedness primarily consist? Some masters

to present his own view (i.e. that blessedness lies above the powers of the soul in the "one" of the soul): "Mêr: wir sprechen, daz si niht enlige an bekennenne noch an minnenne; mêr: ein ist in der sêle, von dem vliuzet bekennen und minnen; daz enbekennet selber niht noch enminnet niht alsô als die krefte der sêle. Der diz bekennet, der bekennet, war ane sælicheit lige."¹⁴⁸ This "one" of the soul does not know that God is working in it, in the way in which it would know him as another. The human being must detach himself from his knowledge, so that he knows neither God nor any creature nor his own self; then he is truly "poor."

Thirdly, "daz ist ein arm mensche, der niht enhât." "Not to have" in the sense of "possessing nothing" is the common understanding of poverty, but this is not what Eckhart means. Rather, "not to have" is the most extreme form of poverty, which surpasses even "not wanting" and "not knowing." In this uttermost poverty, the human person no longer has even a place where God can work; rather, the human person and God are one. God works in such a person as He does in his own self, and the human person rests in his pre-creaturely origin, beyond time and space.

wan daz ist armuot des geistes, daz er alsô ledic stâ gotes und aller sîner werke, welle got wirken in der sêle, daz er selbe sî diu stat, dar inne er wûrken wil . . . Wan, vindet er den menschen alsô arm, sô ist got sîn selbes werk lîdende, und got ist ein eigen stat sîner werke mit dem, daz got ist ein wûrker in im selben. Alhie, in dirre armuot sô ervolget der mensche daz êwic wesen, daz er ist gewesen und daz er nû ist und daz er iemer blîben sol.¹⁴⁹

All this is founded in the nature of the human person; and yet the apostle Paul says, "All that I am, I am through the grace of God" (1 Cor. 15:10). Eckhart solves this problem by means of a brief sketch of his doctrine of grace. Grace is effective in our willing and our acting in the world. It is

teach that it consists in love; others teach that it consists in knowing and in loving, and these speak better."]

¹⁴⁸ Meister Eckhart, Pr. 52; *Lectura Eckhardi* 1 (note 103 above), 174, 4–8 ["But I maintain that it consists neither in knowing nor in loving. Indeed, more than this: there is a 'one' in the soul, from which knowing and loving come forth. It itself knows nothing and loves nothing—as the powers of the soul do. Only the person who grasps this 'one' knows wherein blessedness consists."]

¹⁴⁹ Meister Eckhart, Pr. 52; *Lectura Eckhardi* 1 (note 103 above), 176, 13–18. ["For this is poverty of the spirit: to live detached from God and his works, so that God, if he wants to work in the soul, is himself the place in which he wants to work... For if God finds the human person in this poverty, God takes up his activity in his own self; he is his own place of his own works, for God is an agent who works in his own self. Here now, in this poverty, the human person attains the eternal Being which he once was, which he is now, and which he will always continue to be."]

limited to the sphere of the *intellectus possibilis* and is the presupposition for our path to perfection. When we come to the highest point of the soul, in the "one," grace is no longer necessary.¹⁵⁰ This is why Eckhart's argumentation is valid: "Alsô sprechen wir, daz der mensche alsô arm sül stân, daz er niht ensî noch enhave deheine stat, dar got inne mûge wûrken. Dâ der mensche stat beheltet, dâ beheltet er underscheit. Her umbe sô bite ich got, daz er mich quît mache gotes."¹⁵¹

Eckhart concludes his sermon on poverty with an intellectual vision of the One, which is one of the vividest passages in his German œuvre:

wan in dem wesene gotes, dâ got ist obe wesene und ob underscheide, dâ was ich selbe, und dâ wolte ich mich selben und bekante mich selben ze machenne disen menschen. Her umbe sô bin ich mîn selbes sache nâch mînem wesene, daz êwic ist, und niht nâch mînem gewerdenne, daz zîtlich ist... In mîner geburt dâ wurden alliu dinc geborn, und ich was sache mîn selbes und aller dinge; und hæte ich gewolt, ich enwære niht, noch alliu dinc enwæren niht; und enwære ich niht, sô enwære ouch got niht. Daz got got ist, des bin ich ein sache; enwære ich nicht, sô enwære got niht got. Diz ze wizenne des enist niht nôt.¹⁵²

The closing sentence is the third appeal in this sermon to the hearers/readers, which makes the understanding of this sermon dependent on the existential presupposition of coming to resemble the truth. "Der diz niht enverstât, der enbekûmber sîn herze niht dâ mite. Wan alsô lange der mensche niht glîch enist dirre wârheit, sô lange ensol er dise rede niht

¹⁵⁰ Meister Eckhart, Pr. 52; *Lectura Eckhardi* 1 (note 103 above), 176, 22–26: "Hie zuo antwûrtet man alsô, daz sant Pauli wort wâr sîn: daz diu gnâde gotes in im was, des was nôt; wan diu gnâde gotes diu worhte in im, daz diu zuovellîchet verkreic daz wesen. Dô diu gnâde endete und ir werk volbrâhte, dô bleip Paulus, daz er was" ["To this, the answer runs: What Paul says is true. He needed grace, since God's grace brought it about in him that that which was accidental in him entered into his being. When grace ended, since it had accomplished its work, Paul remained what he was"]. On Eckhart's doctrine of grace, see Flasch, "Predigt Nr. 52 'Beati pauperes spiritu'" (note 136 above), 195–97.

¹⁵¹ Meister Eckhart, Pr. 52; *Lectura Eckhardi* 1 (note 103 above), 176, 27–178, 1 ["Accordingly, we teach that the human person should exist in such poverty that he is no place, and has no place, in which God could work. Where the human person retains such a place, he holds fast to the difference. Therefore I ask God that he may detach me from God"].

¹⁵² Meister Eckhart, Pr. 52; *Lectura Eckhardi* 1 (note 103 above), 178, 3–15. ["For in the same essence of God, thanks to which God is above Being and difference, was I myself. And there I wanted myself, and there I knew myself as the one who created this human being. Therefore, I am the origin of my own self, according to my essence, which is eternal, not according to my coming into being, which is temporal... At my birth, all things were born, and I was the origin of my own self and of all things, and if I had so wanted, I would not have come into existence, and all the things would not have come into existence. And if I did not exist, then God too would not exist. I am the origin of the fact that God is God. And if I did not exist, God would not be God. It is not absolutely necessary to know this."]

verstân; wan diz ist ein unbedahtiu wârheit, diu komen ist ûz dem herzen gotes sunder mittel.”¹⁵³ Such a dogged insistence on appealing to truth brings to mind the words of Jesus in the Gospel. There is just one passage in Scripture that fits Eckhart’s context, namely the passion of Christ according to the Gospel of John. “Omnis qui est ex veritate, audit vocem meam,” says Jesus to Pilate, who then asks: “Quid est veritas?”¹⁵⁴

The trial before the Inquisition was looming, and Sermon 52 is a kind of philosophical testament of Eckhart, in which he puts himself on the stage (so to speak) in the most audacious way. In the *Liber Benedictus*, as we have seen, Eckhart puts himself on the same level as the evangelist John; here, he proclaims the unmediated truth of God. In other words, here he speaks as the Son.¹⁵⁵

5. VON ABGESCHIEDENHEIT

The treatise entitled *Von abgescheidenheit*¹⁵⁶ in the manuscripts is one of the most widely attested of all Eckhart’s writings (see n. 11 above).

¹⁵³ Meister Eckhart, Pr. 52; *Lectura Eckhardi* 1 (note 103 above), 180, 7–10. [“One who does not understand this discourse should not trouble himself in his heart because of this. For as long as the human being does not resemble this truth, he will not understand this discourse, for it is uncovered truth, as it comes immediately from the heart of God.”]

¹⁵⁴ See Jn 18:37–38: “Dixit itaque ei Pilatus: ‘Ergo rex es tu?’ Respondit Jesus: ‘Tu dicis quia rex sum ego. Ego in hoc natus sum et ad hoc veni in mundum, ut testimonium perhibeam veritati: omnis qui est ex veritate, audit vocem meam.’ Dicit ei Pilatus: ‘Quid est veritas?’” Eckhart expounds Jn. 18:38 at length by means of a discussion of the question of the truth: see Karl Christ and Josef Koch (eds.), *Meister Eckhart, Die lateinischen Werke III: Magistri Eckhardi Expositio sancti evangelii secundum Iohannem* (Stuttgart: 1936), 598–603, nn. 683–88.

¹⁵⁵ See the very similar passage by Meister Eckhart, Pr. 34; DW II, 166, 4–167, 5: “mêr: daz er sprichet: ‘in der wârheit.’ Was ist wârheit? Der sun ist alleine diu wârheit und niht der vater noch der heilige geist, wan als sie éin wârheit sint in irm wesene. Daz ist wârheit, swenne ich daz offenbâre, daz ich in mînem herzen hân, und spriche daz in dem munde, alsô als ich ez in mînem herzen hân, sunder <glîchnüsse> und sunder bedahtheit. Diu offenbârung daz ist wârheit. Alsô ist der sun alleine diu wârheit. Allez, daz der vater hât und geleisten mac, daz sprichet er alzemâle in sînen sun. Diu offenbârung und diu wûrkung daz ist wârheit. Her umbe sprichet er: ‘in der wârheit’” [“Rather, I < speak > about the fact that he says: ‘in the truth.’ What is truth? The Son alone is the truth, not the Father nor the Holy Spirit, except to the extent that they are one truth in their Being. It is the truth, whenever I reveal what I bear in my heart and state it with the mouth as I have it in my heart, without hypocrisy and without covering it up. This revelation, that is truth. Accordingly, the Son alone is the truth. Everything that the Father has and can offer, he speaks wholly and completely in his Son. This revelation and this activity, that is truth. Of this he < i.e. David > says: ‘in the truth.’”]

¹⁵⁶ Critical edition: *Von abgescheidenheit*, in *Meister Eckhart, Die deutschen Werke V*, ed. Josef Quint (Stuttgart: 1963), 377–468; Largier (ed.), *Meister Eckhart Werke II* (note 27

Although no textual witness ascribes it to the Master, its theme and its diction, as well as the texts with which it is transmitted,¹⁵⁷ point unambiguously to the circle around Meister Eckhart. It has been proposed that Eckhart himself was the author, so that Josef Quint included this treatise in the critical collected edition. On the other hand, it is impossible to overlook the uncertainties and inconsistencies, and parts of the treatise go thematically beyond Eckhart. Indeed, it "exaggerates" Eckhartian terminology and his mode of expression, so that Kurt Ruh regards *Von abegescheidenheit* "quite simply as inauthentic"¹⁵⁸ and discusses it under the rubric of "Scholastic successors of Meister Eckhart in the early fourteenth century." His conclusion is that in this case, a writer working on Eckhartian materials has "developed Eckhart's thinking and formulated it with greater verbal precision": "Of all the successor texts, *Von abegescheidenheit* is the closest to Eckhart. It carries on where the Meister left off."¹⁵⁹ It was widely influential throughout the entire Middle Ages, and up to the 17th century.¹⁶⁰

The decisive reason for Ruh's verdict against authorship by Eckhart (a verdict accepted by Germanists) is an alleged quotation from Eckhart's "sermon on poverty" in *Von abegescheidenheit*, which is introduced by the words: "A master says": "Dâ von mûgen wir auch nemen, daz ein meister sprichet: die armen des geistes sint die, die gote alliu dinc gelâzen hânt, als er sie hâte, dô wir niht enwâren."¹⁶¹ The argument is that Eckhart would not have quoted himself in this form. When we compare this quotation with the text of the "sermon on poverty," however, serious doubts arise: "Wan, sol der mensche armuot haben gewêrlîche, sô sol er sînes geschaffenen willen alsô ledic stân, als er tete, dô er niht enwas."¹⁶²

above), 434–59 (*Von abegescheidenheit*). Bibliography: Erwin Waldschütz, *Meister Eckhart. Eine philosophische Interpretation der Traktate* (Bonn: 1978), 194–244; Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik* 3 (note 12 above), 355–58, with further bibliography; on the problem of authenticity, 349–351.

¹⁵⁷ Parts of the treatise are integrated into the Pseudo-Eckhartian treatises Pfeiffer Tr. III and Tr. XI, and in the so-called *Pomegranate Treatise*; Largier (ed.) *Meister Eckhart, Werke* II (note 27 above), 803, and Quint (ed.), *Meister Eckhart, Die deutschen Werke* V (note 156 above), 382–86.

¹⁵⁸ Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik* 3 (note 12 above), 349.

¹⁵⁹ Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik* 3, 357 and 358.

¹⁶⁰ See Largier (ed.), *Meister Eckhart, Werke* II (note 27 above), 803f.

¹⁶¹ Meister Eckhart, *Von abegescheidenheit*; DW V, 428, 9–11 ["On this, we may also mention what a master says: The poor of the spirit are those who have handed over all things to God, in the same way that he had them when we did not <yet> exist."]

¹⁶² Meister Eckhart, Pr. 52; DW II, 491, 7–9 ["For if the human person is truly to have poverty, he must be as empty of his created will as he was when he did not <yet> exist"]; and see Quint's note, 509, note 20.

There are considerable divergences in the wording, and the contents of the affirmations also differ. For this reason, I agree with Quint's view that this passage in *Von abegescheidenheit* is not a self-quotation by Eckhart.¹⁶³ And this means that the most important argument against his authorship loses its validity.

The brief treatise *Von abegescheidenheit* contains all the important elements of Eckhart's thought and is devoted to a theme which Eckhart mentions as the first of the recurrent subjects in his program of preaching: "Swenne ich predige, sô pflige ich ze sprechenne von abegescheidenheit und daz der mensche ledic werde sîn selbes und aller dinge."¹⁶⁴ As Quint has shown, the philosophical concept of *Abgeschiedenheit* was developed by Eckhart in the vernacular; it was he who coined the lexeme *abegescheidenheit*,¹⁶⁵ which must be understood as an abstraction formed in relation to the participial adjective *abegescheiden*.¹⁶⁶ As Eckhart understands it, *abegescheidenheit* means not only the detachment and turning away from creatures and from one's own ego—also expressed in the concept of *Gelassenheit*—but also the detachment of the highest reason, and its intuitive knowledge of the truth.¹⁶⁷

In this treatise, which is constructed as a dialogue with an imaginary reader, Eckhart's teaching is continuously guided by the reason. It begins

¹⁶³ See Quint (ed.), *Meister Eckhart, Die deutschen Werke V* (note 156 above), 456f. It is interesting that the passage from *Von abegescheidenheit* occurs literally in the Pseudo-Eckhartian treatise Pfeiffer XIV, *Sant Johannes spricht* "ich sach daz wort in gote:" "Kristus spricht 'sêlic sint die armen des geistes: gotes rîche ist in inen.' Die armen des geistes daz sint die, die got elliu dinc gelâzen hânt, als er sie hâte, dô wir niht enwâren, und niht an im selber." Franz Pfeiffer (ed.), *Deutsche Mystiker des 14. Jahrhunderts 2: Meister Eckhart* (Leipzig: 1857; repr. Aalen: 1962), 533, 19–22.

¹⁶⁴ Meister Eckhart, Pr. 53; DW II, 528, 5–6 ["When I preach, I am accustomed to speak about *Abgescheidenheit* and to say that the human person must become empty of himself and of all things"].

¹⁶⁵ See Quint (ed.), *Meister Eckhart, Die deutschen Werke V* (note 156 above), 438–40.

¹⁶⁶ The Middle High German *abegescheiden* corresponds to the Latin *separatus* and *abstractus*. The Latin abstract nouns *separatio* and *abstractio* do not, however, correspond to the Middle High German *abegescheidenheit*, which clearly designates the durative state and thus demands a Latin form ending in *-(i)tas*.

¹⁶⁷ See Quint (ed.), *Meister Eckhart, Die deutschen Werke V* (note 156 above), 438f. Eckhart's presentation of the intellect in his *Commentary on John* is in keeping with the concept developed in *Von abegescheidenheit: Magistri Echardi Expositio sancti Evangelii secundum Iohannem*, n. 318: "Intellectus autem abstrahit ab hic et nunc, et secundum genus suum nulli nihil habet commune: impermixtus est, separatus est, ex III De anima... Ubi notandum quod forma omnis quanto est separatio a materia, continuo et tempore, tanto nobilior et divinior. Esto talis: humilis, scilicet subiectus deo, separatus a tempore et continuo, impermixtus, nulli nihil habens commune: venis ad deum, et deus ad te:" Meister Eckhart, *Die lateinischen Werke III*, ed. Karl Christ and Josef Koch (Stuttgart: 1936), 265f.

with the question about the highest virtue. After the rational study of all the relevant texts,¹⁶⁸ he draws the rational conclusion: "Und sô ich alle die geschrift durchgründe, als verre mîn vernunft erziugen und bekenen mac, sô envinde ich nicht anders, wan daz lûteriu abegescheidenheit ob allen dingen sî."¹⁶⁹ The virtue of *Abgeschiedenheit* (modern spelling) should be evaluated more highly than love, higher than humility, and higher than mercy, since only *Abgeschiedenheit* is completely free of all ties to creatures. This amounts to a "negative" definition of *Abgeschiedenheit*. Eckhart then goes on to elaborate a "positive" definition. He begins with a definition of the person who is *abgeschieden*, and then turns to the definition of the concept.

Eckhart borrows the special intellectual disposition of the *abgeschieden* person from Avicenna. This is the only explicit quotation of Avicenna in Eckhart's German œuvre and, as Alessandro Palazzo has shown,¹⁷⁰ it was mediated to Eckhart via his reading of Albert the Great. The context is *De somno et vigilia* and the problem posed to the philosophy of nature by natural prophecy and by the manipulation of matter through the power of the spirit. The enduring power of the *abgeschieden* intellect—i.e. *Abgeschiedenheit*—is one with the Being of God, so that God is as it were "compelled"¹⁷¹ to return into the *abgeschieden* person, or the spirit of this person is divinized.¹⁷²

Ein meister heizet Avicenna, der sprichet: des geistes, der abegescheiden stât, des adel ist alsô grôz, swaz er schouwet, daz ist wâr, und swes er begert, des ist er gewert, und swaz er gebiutet, des muoz man im gehôrsam sîn. Und solt daz wizen vûr wâr: swenne der vrîe geist stât in rechter abegescheidenheit, sô twinget er got ze sînem wesene; und möhte er gestân formelôsichlich und âne alle zuovelle, sô nâme er gotes eigenschaft an sich. Daz enmac aber got niemanne geben dan im selber; dâ von enmac got niht mêr getuon dem abegescheidenen geiste, wan daz er sich selben im gibet.

¹⁶⁸ Eckhart refers to the ancient philosophers, to the prophets, and to the Old and New Testaments; see *Von abegescheidenheit*, DW V, 400, 2–3.

¹⁶⁹ Meister Eckhart, *Von abegescheidenheit*, DW V, 401, 4–6 ["And when I study all the writings in depth, as far as my reason is able to do so and I am able to know them, I find nothing other than that pure *Abgeschiedenheit* surpasses them all"].

¹⁷⁰ See Palazzo, "Es sprichet gar ein hôher meister: Eckhart e Avicenna" (note 13 above), 87–94. In his German works, Eckhart quotes Avicenna only anonymously as "a master."

¹⁷¹ See note 37 above on the "theorem of *abgeschiedenheit*" in the *Discourses of Instruction*.

¹⁷² Albert calls the one who is endowed with this intellect "quasi Deus incarnatus": see Albert the Great, *De somno et vigilia* 3, 1.6, "et est quoad intellectum quasi Deus incarnatus, qui perfectionem habet ad omnia scienda ex seipso." Auguste Borgnet (ed.), *Alberti Magni Opera omnia* 9 (Paris: 1890), 184b–185b.

Und der mensche, der alsô stât in ganzer abegescheidenheit, der wirt alsô gezûcket in die êwicheit, daz in kein zergentlich dinc bewegen enmac, daz er nihtes niht enpfîndet, daz lîplich ist, und heizet der werlte tût, wan im smacket niht, daz irdisch ist. Das meinet sant Paulus, dô er sprach: ich lebe und lebe doch niht; Kristus lebet in mir.¹⁷³

Eckhart's alleged teaching about the *unio mystica* is thus based on Aristotelian natural philosophy, as interpreted by Avicenna and Albert the Great.

In itself, *Abgescheidenheit* denotes the greatest resemblance to God, since God's Being is itself based on an immovable *Abgescheidenheit*¹⁷⁴ that has existed from all eternity and will exist for all eternity, and is untouched by any prayer or good deed. It is indeed true that the external human being, even in *Abgescheidenheit*, can be touched by suffering, like Christ in Gethsemane or Mary under the cross, but the internal human being remains whole and immovable in God.

Finally, Eckhart teaches "all rational human beings"¹⁷⁵ about the benefits of *Abgeschiedenheit* and how one may attain this. In the perfect

¹⁷³ Meister Eckhart, *Von abgescheidenheit*; DW V, 410, 7–411, 10. ["One master is called Avicenna, who says: The spirit that is *abgeschieden* has so great a nobility that whatever it sees is true, and whatever it desires is granted to it, and one must obey it in everything that it commands. Und this you must know in truth: Whenever the free spirit stands in right *Abgeschiedenheit*, it compels God to his Being; and if it could exist without any form and without all the accidentals, it would take on God's own Being. However, God cannot give this to anyone other than to his own self; accordingly, God cannot do for the *abgeschieden* spirit anything more than giving himself to it. And the human being who exists thus in total *Abgeschiedenheit* is caught up into eternity in such a manner that nothing transient can move him, that he feels nothing that is bodily, and that he is counted as dead for the world, since nothing that is earthly delights him. This is what Saint Paul means, when he said: 'I live and yet I do not live; Christ lives in me.'" (Gal. 2:20)]; see Albert the Great, *De somno et vigilia* 3, 1.6: "Avicenna et Algazel . . . dicunt enim quod intellectus in homine de natura intellectus est agentis, et est proprius ejus effectus: et ideo est separatus et non mixtus corpori" (Borgnet, 184b–185b). Another comparable passage is Albert the Great, *De intellectu et intelligibili* 1, 3.3 and 2, 9, ed. Auguste Borgnet, *Alberti Magni Opera omnia* 9 (Paris: 1890), 501b and 517a; see Palazzo, "Ez sprichet gar ein hôher meister: Eckhart e Avicenna" (note 13 above), 92 n. 64.

¹⁷⁴ Ruh regards this affirmation as a teaching of the anonymous author of the treatise and as an "intellectual deficit," but here he has in view only the negative definition of *abegescheidenheit* as the detachment from all things, not the positive definition as *intellectus separatus*; see Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik* 3 (note 12 above), 356f.

¹⁷⁵ See Meister Eckhart, *Von abegescheidenheit*; DW V, 431, 8: "Nû merket, alle vernünftigen liute!;" 432, 3–4: "Hie merket, alle vernünftige menschen!;" 433, 1: "Nû merket, alle vernünftigen menschen!" In the *Liber Benedictus*, Eckhart addresses the "redelîchen menschen" (see note 68 above) and bases his metaphysics on the knowledge of the "vernünftigen sêle" (see note 64 above).

Abgeschiedenheit, every natural-creaturely consolation is overcome, even the conceptual image of Christ as consoler. Unity with Christ is unity in suffering, and this means that suffering is the quickest path to perfection—not however as *imitatio*, but as a state of deepest humility and openness to God in *Abgeschiedenheit*.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ See Meister Eckhart, *Von abegescheidenheit*; DW V, 430, 12–434, 2, and Largier (ed.), *Meister Eckhart, Werke* II (note 27 above), 805f. [English translation: Brian McNeil.]

THE THEORY OF THE TRANSCENDENTALS IN MEISTER ECKHART

Tamar Tsopurashvili

1. HISTORICAL REVIEW

The theory of transcendentals is the central reference point of medieval ontology. The transcendentals can be considered as an opportunity to establish a philosophical ontology. A theory of the transcendentals discusses the transcategorical designations that are expressed in everything and are broader than generic, specific, and individual beings. Transcendentals in their universal meaning transcend the scope of the Aristotelian categories: they are not based on one category but cover all of them. Although they are convertible with each other, they are not synonyms. It follows that the transcendentals are identical in their subject, but differ according to their concepts. And so, truth expresses something different from goodness, although both of them, goodness and truth, are in the things simultaneously.¹

Transcendentals are characterized as the *communissima* and *prima*. These concepts and realities have different philosophical functions. In the ontological sense, transcendentals are the most general (*communissima*) concepts because they can be expressed by all things. In the cognitive sense, they are the first (*prima*), because they cannot be reduced to something prior. Thus, the theory of the transcendentals is an indication of the tendency to be comprehensive in later medieval philosophy.

In 1230, the *Summa de bono* of Philip the Chancellor was published. In the prologue, he writes that the most general (*communissima*) terms are Being (*esse*), One (*unum*), Truth (*verum*), and Goodness (*bonum*).² Philip discusses two main problems that are the most important in the theory of transcendentals: the problem of the difference between the general terms (*communissima*) that are convertible with each other, and the problem of their relation to the highest being, God. The *communissima* are identical

¹ The basis for the medieval theory of the transcendentals is found in book four of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, where he discusses the nature of identity and difference; see Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 4, 2, 1003b 22–1004a 1, in *Aristotelis opera*, vol. 1, ed. Olof Gigon (Berlin: 1960), 980–1093.

² See Philip the Chancellor, *Summa de bono*, ed. Niklaus Wicki (Bern: 1985), 4.

according their *supposita*, but they are different *secundum intentionem*.³ The negative definition of the One by Aristotle becomes a model for the order of the *communissima*. Not only the One but also Truth and Goodness are added to Being, which itself is undivided. Because Eckhart makes the doctrine of the transcendentals the centerpiece of his doctrine about God, Theo Kobusch maintains that this doctrine is Eckhart's greatest innovation.⁴

With regard to his metaphysics, the basic text of Meister Eckhart is the *Opus tripartitum*. As the name indicates, this work was intended to be tripartite in its construction: (1) the *Opus propositionum* with more than 1000 theses provides the main principles of Eckhart's doctrine; (2) the *Opus quaestionum* was to have been based on the questions in the *Summa theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas; and (3) the *Opus expositionum* was to deal with the exegesis of Holy Scripture. It was to have two parts: a biblical exegesis and an *Opus sermonum*. Eckhart intended to discuss the specific citations of the Bible that for him were the most important in terms of their content. We cannot be sure if Eckhart completed this program, because all we have now is merely the torso of the *Opus expositionum*—from the *Opus quaestionum* we know almost nothing, and we only have the prologue to the *Opus propositionum*.⁵ However, a good representative part of the *Opus expositionum* is extant.

The prologues to the *Opus tripartitum* display the speculative general project, which considers metaphysics, theology, and biblical exegesis to be parts of one interrelated work of interpretation. Eckhart considers such interrelation to be a strict, rationally coherent philosophical approach. In the *Expositio sancti evangelii secundum Iohannem*, he claims:

In the explanation of this word and others which follow, the intention of the author, just as in all of his works, is to explain by means of the natural

³ See Philip the Chancellor, *Summa de bono*, 5–17.

⁴ Theo Kobusch, "Lesemeistermetaphysik—Lebemeistermetaphysik: Zur Einheit der Philosophie Meister Eckharts," in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt*, ed. Andreas Speer and Lydia Wegener, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 32 (Berlin: 2005), 283–97. See 248. On the innovative role of Meister Eckhart's doctrine, see also Otto Langer, "Meister Eckharts Begründung einer neuen Theologie," in *Meister Eckhart aus theologischer Sicht*, ed. Volker Leppin and Hans-Jochen Schiewer, *Meister Eckhart Jahrbuch* 1 (Stuttgart: 2007), 1–26.

⁵ See Jan A. Aersten, "Der 'Systematiker' Eckhart," in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt*, ed. Andreas Speer and Lydia Wegener (see note 4), 189–230. On the problem of the dating of Meister Eckhart's works, see Loris Sturlese, "Meister Eckhart in der Bibliotheca Amp-loniana. Neues zur Datierung des 'Opus tripartitum'," in *Die Bibliotheca Amp-loniana. Ihre Bedeutung im Spannungsfeld von Aristotelismus, Nominalismus und Humanismus*, ed. Andreas Speer, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 23 (Berlin: 1995), 434–46.

reasons of the philosophers what the holy Christian faith and the scripture of both testaments assert.⁶

Therefore, Eckhart's intention is to highlight the concordance between philosophical *ratio* and biblical revelation. This requires the identification of theology, the science of the Bible, with the centerpiece of philosophy, that is, metaphysics. In fact, he speaks of Being as the object of this act of interpretation. Hence, his biblical exegesis is certainly based on the remaining torso of Eckhart's metaphysics. Such exegesis of the Bible means that what is given as the truth of Sacred Scripture is in agreement with what natural reason is able to conclude about the *divina, naturalia et moralia*. According to Niklaus Largier, Eckhart's works are rooted first of all in the categories of *expositio* that refer to the Holy Scripture. Hence, in Eckhart's thinking religion has an importance that is not replaced by reason/intellect. Rather, it is taken up and retained in intellectual thinking.⁷ Erwin Waldschütz holds that under Eckhart's metaphysics is to be understood the unity of philosophy and theology. This means that philosophy, as first philosophy (as the discipline about Being), and theology (as the discipline about the primary or highest Being) are not separated from each other. Waldschütz argues that the concept of "metaphysics" designates the speculative sphere of human thinking, in which one discovers the unity of both disciplines.⁸ That is, philosophy does not destroy the text of Scripture. Rather, it takes up the content of the scriptural text and retrieves it. Therefore, to challenge the claim that Eckhart was a philosopher also means that one has to challenge the claim that he was a theologian.

⁶ Meister Eckhart, *Expositio sancti evangelii secundum Iohannem*, n. 2, in *Meister Eckhart. Die deutschen und die lateinischen Werke, herausgegeben im Auftrage der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft. Die lateinischen Werke* (Stuttgart: 1936–89) (abbrev. LW), LW III, ed. Karl Christ, Bruno Decker, Heribert Fischer, Josef Koch, Loris Sturlese, and Albert Zimmermann (Stuttgart: 1936ff.), 4, 4–6: "In cuius verbi expositione et aliorum quae sequuntur, intentio est auctoris, sicut et in omnibus suis editionibus, ea quae sacra asserit fides christiana et utriusque testamenti scriptura, exponere per rationes naturales philosophorum."

⁷ See Niklaus Largier, *Zeit, Zeitlichkeit, Ewigkeit. Ein Aufriß des Zeitproblems bei Dietrich von Freiberg und Meister Eckhart (Deutsche Literatur von den Anfängen bis 1700)*, (Bern: 1989), 73, note 161: "Eckharts Denken bewegt sich, dies zeigt die Gesamtheit seiner Werke, vorerst in den Kategorien der *expositio*, die schlechthin auf die Schrift rekurriert. Damit ist auch dem Faktum des Glaubens ein Gewicht beigemessen, das nicht grundsätzlich durch die Vernunft überholt, sondern in dieser aufgehoben ist."

⁸ Erwin Waldschütz, *Denken und Erfahren des Grundes. Zur philosophischen Deutung Meister Eckharts* (Vienna: 1989), 78.

Thus, Eckhart's theory claims a certain independence and autonomy for philosophical reflection. It presupposes the axiomatic scheme because the transcendentals are not only the most general real characteristics of Being, but they are also the basic or primary concepts. They cannot be simply defined, because they are presupposed in all other concepts; and likewise, in all knowledge and in all disciplines, they cannot be simply defined in the normal manner of definition.⁹

2. TRANSCENDENTALS AND THE TRINITY

The main questions of the first four treatises of the *Opus tripartitum* are Being, Unity, Truth, Goodness, and the concepts that are opposed to these. One significant characteristic of Eckhart's theory of transcendentals is that they apply primarily not to common being (*ens commune*) but to the inner life of God. In his *Expositio sancti evangelii secundum Iohannem*, Eckhart claims that:

Those properties which are God's own are Being or being, Unity, Truth, Goodness. For God has these four transcendental as properties in as much as <God> is "the first," which is "rich in itself." God has these because the rich in itself has that which is proper to itself. For the aforementioned four (terms) are for everyone "guests" within the First, and "immigrants," household members to God.¹⁰

In this, Eckhart uses the theory of the transcendentals to provide a philosophical explanation of the inner divine life of the Trinity. Through it, he achieves a new dimension in speculative thinking about the Trinity that leads to the equating of the persons of the Trinity with the transcendentals. This intention can be found in *Expositio sancti evangelii secundum Iohannem*. Eckhart starts the argument with the declaration that nothing arises from the indifferent and the indefinite. He argues that these characteristics (the transcendentals) are suitable for being (*esse*), because being

⁹ Wouter Goris, *Einheit als Prinzip und Ziel. Versuch über die Einheitsmetaphysik des Opus tripartitum Meister Eckharts*, (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters) 59 (Leiden: 1997), 16.

¹⁰ Meister Eckhart, *Expositio sancti evangelii secundum Iohannem*, n. 97, LW III, 83, 13–84, 1: "Secundo sic exponatur: propria ista, in quae deus venit, sunt esse sive ens, unum, verum, bonum. Haec enim quattuor deus habet propria, utpote 'Primum,' quod 'est dives per se.' Habet ista, quia 'dives' habet propria habet propria, quia 'per se.' Praedicta enim quattuor omnibus citra primum 'hospites' sunt 'et advenae,' domestica deo."

applies to the inner and essence. So, being is equated with the divine essence.¹¹

The being (*esse*) that creates is identical with the One (*unum*). Eckhart follows book ten of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and argues that the One as the One is definite through its being one. The One is clearly distinguishable from plurality. Therefore, the One according to its content and peculiarity is the origin of plurality and, hence, the origin of all divinity and of all creatures.¹² Thus, the One is equated with the Father, who is the first origin. Also, as the One or Father initiates the origination of the whole of divinity and all creatures (thus, in the latter case, the generation of plurality), he is the original unity in the divinity. The Father is the One as unity; as unity he is the essence or the essential unity, and being in the One is not being as common being any more, it is simply the One itself.¹³

The One at the same time is the prior; hence it is the origin of all. To be the origin means that the One creates everything that is created after the One according to a certain order. For Eckhart it means that the One as the One and Father generates the truth—the third transcendental—as the Son proceeds only from the Father.¹⁴ So the third transcendental (*verum*) is equated with the Son. Father (*unum*) and Son (*verum*) are one whole, insofar as they have the divine essence (i.e. the same kind of being). The consequence of this unity is the goodness that is generated from the One (Father) and the truth (Son). Goodness (*bonum*) belongs to

¹¹ See Meister Eckhart, *Expositio sancti evangelii secundum Iohannem*, n. 512, LW III, 443, 8–15: “Esse autem, tum quia ad intus et essentiam respicit, tum quia absolutum et indeterminatum, nullius productionis principium est secundum sui rationem. Ab indistincto enim et indeterminato nihil procedit. Unde commentator super II Physicorum reprehendit Avicennam ponentem casum et fortunam circa contingens et ad utrumlibet eo quod casus et fortuna respiciant causam efficientem; contingens autem et ad utrumlibet, utpote indeterminatum, sapit naturam materiae nullius productivum seu effectivum. Hinc est etiam quod theologi dicunt esse seu essentiam nec generare nec generari.”

¹² Meister Eckhart, *Expositio sancti evangelii secundum Iohannem*, n. 513, LW III, 444, 1–5: “Unum vero, quod inter praedicta quattuor immediatius se habet ad esse, et primo et minimo determinat ipsum, propter hoc ut primum determinatum est et esse determinans contra multum, ut patet X Metaphysicae, propter hoc ipsi uni competit ex sui ratione et proprietate esse primum productivum et patrem totius divinitatis et creaturarum.”

¹³ Burkhard Mojsisch, “*Perfectiones spirituales*—Meister Eckharts Theorie der geistigen Vollkommenheiten. Mit möglichkeitsphilosophischen Reflexionen,” in *Die Logik des Transzendentalen*, ed. Martin Pickavé, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 30 (Berlin: 2003), 511–24, see 512.

¹⁴ Meister Eckhart, *Expositio sancti evangelii secundum Iohannem*, n. 513, LW III, 444, 6–8: “Sed quia ‘primum in unoquoque’ origo est et productivum ordine quodam omnium ‘quae post sunt,’ hinc est quod ab uno, ut unum et pater, producitur verum sive veritas proles genita a solo patre uno.”

love and connects them both, Father and Son. It is this connection itself.¹⁵ Consequently, in God one has being or the divine essence that neither creates nor is created itself, the One or Father that creates but is uncreated itself, the truth that is generated only by the One, the goodness that is generated by the One and the Truth together.

Eckhart summarizes the equation of the four transcendentals with God in the following words:

And so therefore, in divine matters, there is being or essence which neither generates nor is generated, one ungenerated Father generating, the true generated from One alone, and the good which proceeds from both, that is to say from the One and the true as they are one. For this reason, it, too, is itself one. And thus we have in the divine one essence but three persons: Father, the Son and Holy Spirit. "And these three are one." (1 John 5): one essence, they are one being.¹⁶

Thus, Eckhart's doctrine receives new meaning due to his use of a philosophical interpretation of the divine Trinity. That is, the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the transcendentals are equated. This causes the transformation of the persons included in the Trinity to be understood in terms of the philosophical implications in Eckhart's text. Eckhart's intention is to exhibit the new dimension of the meanings that are hidden in the metaphorical expressions of the Bible. This idea is also accentuated through the use of the transcendentals to interpret the persons of the Trinity.¹⁷

In this context, the language used by Eckhart gains greater importance. It is the medium for the realization of such new meanings in his metaphysics. In his *Opus tripartitum*, Eckhart outlines the logical-semantic

¹⁵ Meister Eckhart, *Expositio sancti evangelii secundum Iohannem*, n. 513, LW III, 444, 9–11: "Et quia, ut iam supra dictum est, pater et filius unum sunt, hinc est quod ab uno et vero producitur bonum ad amorem et nexum quendam duorum pertinens, aut est potius ipse nexus."

¹⁶ Meister Eckhart, *Expositio sancti evangelii secundum Iohannem*, n. 513, LW III, 444, 14–445, 2: "Sic ergo in divinis habemus esse sive essentiam nec gignentem nec genintam, unum patrem gignentem ingenitum, verum genitum ab uno solo, bonum procedens a duobus, uno scilicet et vero, ut unum sunt. Propter quod et ipsum unum est. Et sic habemus in divinis essentiam unam, personas tres: patrem et filium et spiritum sanctum. 'Et hi tres unum sunt.' I Ioh. 5: unum essentia, unum esse sunt."

¹⁷ Reiner Manstetten discusses the transcendentals in context of the Christology of Meister Eckhart. See Reiner Manstetten, "Christologie bei Meister Eckhart," in *Meister Eckhart aus theologischer Sicht*, ed. Volker Leppin and Hans-Jochen Schiewer, Meister-Eckhart-Jahrbuch 1 (Stuttgart: 2007), 125–44.

understanding of expressions that will be discussed in the next part of our contribution.

3. THE CONTEXTS OF PREDICATION

In the Middle Ages there is a specialized reflection on the interrelation between word (*verbum/vox*), concept (*conceptio*), and thing (*res*). This reflection derives from Boethius's understanding of the interrelation of word, concept, and thing, which in turn depends on Aristotle's *De interpretatione*. According to Boethius, the "word" means the spoken verbal sign, the "concept" signifies the content of word, and the "thing" implies the object to which the concept refers. The noun names the thing, because it is determined for this thing (*positione significanti*). Thus, the nouns are the signs of mental contents (*animae passionum notae*), whereas the concept "mental contents" stands for the Latin expressions *intellectus*, *imagines*, and *similitudines rerum*.¹⁸ This kind of philosophical semantics raises important issues concerning the manner in which language coherently captures reality.

Eckhart outlines three elements of language that are the main constituent parts of this tradition in the *Expositio libri Exodi*:

Second, it ought to be noted that statements or propositions correspond primarily and in themselves not to things but to concepts of things; for expressions are signs and symbols of the concepts (*notae*) in the soul. For this reason they symbolize, indicate and signify the concept itself. And therefore they are judged to be true and false, complex and incomplex, statements or propositions, not from things or from entities absolutely speaking but from the concepts of things and beings, which concepts they signify primarily and in themselves.¹⁹

The concept "*terminus*" is not to be found in this citation; rather, one has a "*conceptio*." *Conceptio* highlights the following aspect: it names the mental frame of the content but not its verbal expression (*vox*). *Terminus* is

¹⁸ See Jakob H.J. Schneider, "Sprache," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* 9 (Darmstadt: 1995), 1454–68, see 1454.

¹⁹ Meister Eckhart, *Expositio libri Exodi*, n. 55, LW II, ed. Karl Weiß (Stuttgart: 1954), 60, 6–12: "Secundo prae-notandum est quod orationes sive propositiones respondent primo et per se non rebus, sed rerum conceptionibus; sunt enim voces signa et 'notae earum quae sunt in anima passionum.' Propter quod ipsam conceptionem notant et indicant et significant. Et idcirco etiam iudicantur esse verae vel falsae, compactae vel incompactae orationes sive propositiones non ex rebus sive ex entibus absolute, sed ex rerum et entium conceptionibus, quas significant primo et per se."

related to both *conceptio* and *vox*. Meik P. Schirpenbach, in his monograph *Wirklichkeit als Beziehung*, accentuates this subtle aspect of *conceptio*. According to Schirpenbach, *conceptio* means the psychological moment of cognition, that is, the formation of a concept. The truth and falseness of a sentence originates in our cognition, not in the thing itself.²⁰ In the citation mentioned above, Eckhart argues that the primary reference point of a word is not the thing itself, but the thought that the intellect has about the thing. Therefore, the reference of language to the thing is not direct. Rather, it is indirect.

At the beginning of the *Prologus generalis in Opus tripartitum*, Eckhart highlights the 14 *termini* and their *oppositio* (LW I 150, 1–151, 1).²¹ Eckhart lists these terms and provides reasons for emphasizing these *termini*. He declares his own intention for such a systematization in the following words:

Because the first work indeed contains a thousand and more propositions, it is divided up into fourteen treatises in accordance with the number of terms, by which the number of propositions is constructed.²²

These *termini* are as follows: Being and a being (*esse et ens*) in opposition to nothing (*nihil*); unity and the one (*unitas et unum*) in opposition to plurality (*multum*); truth and the true (*veritas et verum*) in opposition to false (*falsum*); goodness and the good (*bonitas and bonum*) in opposition to evil (*malum*); love and charity (*amor et caritas*) in opposition to sin (*peccatum*); the proper, virtue, and right (*honestum, virtus et rectum*) in opposition to dishonesty, vice, and the oblique (*turpe, vitium et obliquum*); the whole (*totum*) in opposition to the part (*pars*); the common and indistinct (*commune et indistinctum*) in opposition to the particular and distinct (*proprium et distinctum*); the nature of the highest (*natura superioris*) in

²⁰ Meik P. Schirpenbach, *Wirklichkeit als Beziehung. Das strukturontologische Schema der Termini generales im Opus Tripartitum Meister Eckharts*, (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters), N.S. 66 [=BGPTM]) (Münster: 2004), 49. On the model of the relationship between language and reality, see also Jan Pinborg, *Die Entwicklung der Sprachtheorie im Mittelalter*, (BGPTM) 42, 2 (Münster: 1967), 30–45.

²¹ Meik P. Schirpenbach claims that in this passage one finds the fundamental structure of Eckhart's doctrine and, hence, we can speak about the hermeneutic key of the whole opus. According to Schirpenbach, Eckhart's intention of systematizing his doctrine leads to the conclusion that in this passage one finds the selection of the central terms for his thinking. See Meik P. Schirpenbach, *Wirklichkeit als Beziehung*, 14.

²² Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus tripartitum*, n. 3, LW I, ed. Karl Weiß (Stuttgart: 1964), 149, 6–8: "Opus autem primum, quia propositiones tenet mille et amplius, in tractatus quattuordecim distinguitur iuxta numerum terminorum, de quibus formantur propositiones."

opposition to the nature of the lowest (*nature inferioris*); the first (*primum*) in opposition to the last (*novissimum*); the idea and reason (*idea et ratio*) in opposition to the unformed and privation (*informe et privatio*); that through which something is (*quo est*) and in opposition that which is something (*quod est*); God, the prior Being (*deus summum esse*) in opposition to non-Being (*non esse*); and the substance (*substantia*) in opposition to accident (*accidens*).²³

The question that arises here is whether Eckhart thinks of these *termini* as *termini generales*. Meik P. Schirpenbach answers this question positively when he writes that although these 14 pairs are not classified in this passage as *termini generales*, they can be equated with *termini generales*.²⁴ Such a hypothesis seems to be fruitful for the systematic reconstruction of Eckhart's works. Still, one finds another citation in the *Prologus generalis in opus tripartitum* (LW I, 152, 8–12), where Eckhart lists some *termini generales* and mentions among them also *sapientia*, which is not found under the 14 *termini* listed above:

For the clarity, therefore, of the things that are to be said, three things must be mentioned first. The first is that one must never imagine or judge concerning the general terms such as Being, Unity, Truth, Wisdom, Goodness and such like, according to the mode and nature of accidents. These receive their being in the subject and through the subject and through its change, and they are posterior to it and receive their being by inhering.²⁵

This passage demonstrates that under the *termini generales* Eckhart understands, on the one hand, the transcendentals (*esse, unitas, veritas, bonitas*), and on the other hand the *termini*, which denominate the *perfectiones spirituales* (*sapientia*). At the beginning of the *Tabula prologi in opus tripartitum* he formulates the criterion for the identification of *termini generales*. There we read:

One ought to speak and judge in one way concerning general terms, for instance being, unity, truth, goodness and other things that are convertible with being in this manner, but in another way concerning the other things,

²³ See Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus tripartitum*, n. 3, LW I, 149, 6–151, 1.

²⁴ Meik P. Schirpenbach, *Wirklichkeit als Beziehung*, 15–16.

²⁵ Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus tripartitum*, n. 8, LW I, 152, 8–12: "Ad evidentiam igitur dicendorum tria sunt praemittenda. Primum est quod de terminis generalibus, puta esse, unitate, veritate, sapientia, bonitate et similibus nequaquam est imaginandum vel iudicandum secundum modum et naturam accidentium, quae accipiunt esse in subiecto et per subiectum et per ipsius transmutationem et sunt posteriora ipso et inhaerendo esse accipiunt."

those that are within these and are drawn together into some genus, species, or nature of a being.²⁶

In this citation Eckhart clarifies the convertibility of the other transcendental with Being. This is the criterion for a term to be listed among the *termini generales*. Hence, Eckhart's main premise is that we cannot discuss the *termini generales* as though they were mere accidents. The accidents according to their mode of being are secondary since they receive their being in their subjects. *Termini generales* express the abstract content that is related to the subject through the act of predication.

In *Prologus in Opus propositionum*, where Eckhart provides a survey of propositional context, he differentiates the two structures of predication. He adopts the difference between inherence theory and identity theory, which were the commonly used logical theories in the Middle Ages.²⁷ According to the inherence theory, the predicate has the intensional meaning in the sentence. In case of such predication the copula expresses the fact that the content of the predicate (i.e. the *significatio per se* of the predicate) is to be found in the subject as the form. In the inherence, one finds the internal identity between the subject and the predicate. Unlike the predicate, the subject has the extensional meaning in the sentence. According to identity theory, the predicate as well as subject are considered as extensional. This means that both the subject and the predicate are used as names for the denotative content.

Both theories are related to the problem of using the copula. The main problem of semantics in the 13th century was the following: how is one to analyze the expression "S is P?" Must the copula be understood as part of the predicate or is it the independent part of the sentence, is it a *tertium adiacens*? Lambertus M. de Rijk discusses the problem of predication in the Middle Ages and relates it back to the question of signification. According to de Rijk, the central problem for medieval authors is the problem of the imposition of nouns (*impositio nominum*).²⁸

As we have seen in the citation discussed above, Eckhart makes a semantic distinction between the *termini generales* and other terms ("*aliter*

²⁶ Meister Eckhart, *Tabula prologi in Opus tripartitum*, n. 1, LW I, 129, 5–8: "Unum est quod aliter loquendum est et sentiendum de terminis generalibus, puta de esse, unitate, veritate, bonitate et si quae sint huiusmodi quae cum ente convertuntur, aliter autem de aliis quae citra ista sunt et contracta ad aliquod genus, speciem aut naturam entis."

²⁷ See Jan Pinborg, *Logik und Semantik im Mittelalter. Ein Überblick* (Stuttgart: 1972), 53.

²⁸ Lambertus M. de Rijk, "Die Wirkung der neuplatonischen Semantik auf das mittelalterliche Denken," in *Sprache und Erkenntnis im Mittelalter*, ed. Albert Zimmermann, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 13, 1 (Berlin: 1981), 19–35, see 31.

loquendum est et sentiendum de terminis generalibus"). Besides making this distinction he also accentuates the connotative aspects of *termini* that are used in the sentence. The meaning of the connotative aspect is expressed, in his opinion, by distinguishing the language that we use in relation to the *termini generales* in their full content (i.e. when they refer to God) from the language that we use in relation to the ordinary phenomena:

One ought to judge one way about being and in another way about this and that (particular) being. Similarly (one ought to judge in one way) about being absolutely and simply speaking, with nothing added, and in another way about the being of this (particular) being. Similarly also (one ought to judge) concerning the other (general terms), for instance about the good absolutely speaking (in one way), and in another way about this and that (particular) good, or the good of this (particular) thing, and the good for this (particular) thing. Whenever, then, I say that something is, or whenever I predicate "one," "true," or "good," the aforementioned four fall into the predicate as if "secundum adiacens." And they receive it formally and substantively. But whenever I say that something is this (thing), for example, a stone, the aforementioned four terms are received as the "tertium adiacens" of the proposition, and they are not predicates, but rather they are the copula or the "adiacens praedicati."²⁹

Eckhart stresses here the semantic aspect of the words *esse*, *unum*, *verum*, and *bonum*. The following idea is especially important: when we say something is, or, something is one, true, and good, these four designations are the second phrase in the sentence and they are to be understood in their full sense as the main terms. Thus, the originality of inherence used by Eckhart is displayed in the following manner. Although transcendentals are in the sentence as predicates, they should be understood as the main terms. In the sentence "*deus est unum*" or "*deus est esse*" the predicate is to be understood not as something secondary, but something as meaningful as the noun, which is in the position of subject (in this sentence *deus*).

²⁹ Meister Eckhart, *Prologus in Opus propositionum*, n. 3, LW I, ed. Karl Weiß (Stuttgart: 1964), 166, 13–167, 8: "Secundo prae-notandum est quod aliter sentiendum est de ente et aliter de ente hoc et hoc. Similiter autem de esse absolute et simpliciter nullo addito, et aliter de esse huius et huius. Similiter etiam de aliis, puta de bono absolute et aliter de bono hoc et hoc aut de bono huius et bono huic. Cum igitur dico aliquid esse, aut unum, verum seu bonum praedico, ut in praedicato cadunt tamquam secundum adiacens praemissa quattuor et formaliter accipiunt et substantive. Cum vero dico aliquid esse hoc, puta lapidem, et esse unum lapidem, verum lapidem aut bonum hoc, scilicet lapidem, praemissa quattuor accipiuntur ut tertium adiacens propositionis nec sunt praedicata, sed copula vel adiacens praedicati."

Eckhart expresses the same idea using other words, also in the *Prologus in opus tripartitum*, when he states that we cannot imagine the main terms (i.e. being, unity, true, wisdom, good, etc.), as we do the being and nature of accidents.³⁰ Accidents receive their being in the substance and through the substance and through the transformation of the substance. Thus, they receive their being as being on the basis of something else. It is completely different from the main terms, because being itself and that which is convertible with being is not added to the thing as secondary, but is prior to everything else in the thing.³¹

The difference between both kinds of predication of *termini generales* indicates that the expressions in the sphere of metaphysics do not have the usual form of subject-predicate-sentence according to Meister Eckhart. They use the grammatical structure that is based on the connotative semantic aspects of *termini generales*.

4. TRANSCENDENTALS AS PREDICATES

As we have mentioned, the theological discourse of Meister Eckhart is significantly expressed in the thesis: "*Aliter sentiendum est de ente et aliter de ente hoc et hoc.*"³² The semantic maxim formulated in this way means: our speech and argument about Being in itself must be of a kind other than our speech and argument about this or that concrete being.³³ Such a difference between these two styles of expression refers also to other abstract designations (*similiter etiam de aliis*). Eckhart also extends the distinction between the *hoc et hoc* and *per se* to the other *termini generales*. This idea is expressed in the preliminary note to the *Prologus in opus propositionum*: the distinction between *esse* and *esse hoc et hoc*, *bonum* and *bonum hoc et hoc*, *verum* and *verum hoc et hoc* underlies the first preliminary note, which declares that only God is Being, One, True, and Good in the full

³⁰ See Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus tripartitum*, n. 8, LW I, 152, 8–12. For Latin text, see note 25.

³¹ Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus tripartitum*, n. 8, LW I, 152, 15–153, 2: "Non enim ipsum esse et quae cum ipso convertibiliter idem sunt, superveniunt rebus tamquam posteriora, sed sunt priora omnibus in rebus."

³² Meister Eckhart, *Prologus in Opus propositionum*, n. 3, LW I, 166, 13.

³³ See Meister Eckhart, *Prologus in Opus propositionum*, n. 3, LW I, 166, 12–167, 1: "Secundo praenotandum est quod aliter sentiendum est de ente et aliter de ente hoc et hoc. Similiter autem de esse absolute et simpliciter nullo addito, et aliter de esse huius et huius."

sense of these words.³⁴ Insofar as God is to-be (*esse*) in its full sense, so he is also Being (*ens*) in the full sense. The other transcendentals do not mean anything other than Being considered under different aspects, so God is as *ens per se* also the *unum per se*, the *verum per se* and the *bonum per se*. Therefore, Eckhart assigns the function of the direct explication of the absoluteness of God to all four transcendentals: "*solus deus proprie est ens, unum, verum et bonum.*"³⁵ Through this accentuated equation of the transcendentals with God, Eckhart's doctrine differs significantly from that of Thomas Aquinas. Herbert Wackerzapp outlines the difference between the doctrines of transcendentals by Thomas Aquinas and by Meister Eckhart with the following summary: "according to Thomas, the transcendentals belong to the level of *ens* or *esse commune*, while for Eckhart they belong primarily to God."³⁶

Since the four transcendentals are the expressions of God's absoluteness, at the same time they are predicated of God. Must the transcendentals be understood as predicates in the full sense or only in a particular sense? Eckhart answers this question in the *Prologus in Opus propositionum* in the following way:

When therefore I speak of something as being or one or true or good, I judge that the four just mentioned (transcendentals) fall however to the predicate as "*secundum adiacens*" and are to be interpreted formally and substantively. When indeed I refer to this particular being, for example a stone and the being of one stone, the truth or goodness of this one thing, the stone, the four aforementioned (transcendentals) are to be interpreted as "*tertium adiacens*" of the proposition. They are not predicates, but rather a copula or something related to the predicate.³⁷

Hence, according to Eckhart, when we say that something is or that it is One, True, or Good, these designations occur as the second part of the sentence and are to be understood in their full sense as the main words. When the abstract designations express the full content of the concept,

³⁴ See Meister Eckhart, *Prologus in Opus propositionum*, n. 3, LW I, 167, 9: "*solus deus proprie est ens, unum, verum et bonum.*"

³⁵ Meister Eckhart, *Prologus in Opus propositionum*, n. 4, LW I, 167, 9–10.

³⁶ Herbert Wackerzapp, *Der Einfluß Meister Eckharts auf die ersten philosophischen Schriften des Nikolaus von Kues (1440–50)*, (BGPTM) 39 (Münster: 1962), 17.

³⁷ Meister Eckhart, *Prologus in Opus propositionum*, n. 3, LW I, 167, 2–8: "*Cum igitur dico aliquid esse, aut unum, verum seu bonum praedico, et in praedicatione cadunt tamquam secundum adiacens praemissa quattuor et formaliter accipiuntur et substantive. Cum vero dico aliquid esse hoc, puta lapidem, et esse unum lapidem, verum lapidem aut bonum hoc, scilicet lapidem, praemissa quattuor accipiuntur ut tertiam adiacens propositionis nec sunt praedicata, sed copula vel adiacens praedicati.*"

they are to be understood as the main terms. This issue is significant only for the *perfectiones generales* themselves and not for the particular definite realization of these perfections, in particular those expressed with the words "*hoc et hoc*." In other words, in the citation mentioned above one finds the main theses for the semantic analyses of sentences that are interdependent with ontology: denomination of "this Being" or "this and that one" or "this and that true" means the adding of "this" and "that," but not the adding of the content of Being, Unity, Truth, or Goodness to a particular being.³⁸ It means that the concrete Being (i.e. *ens hoc aut hoc*) cannot have or express the higher content of being than the being per se, the word in its full sense.

5. THE CONVERTIBILITY OF THE TRANSCENDENTALS

When Meister Eckhart equates the transcendentals with God, he harkens back to the scholastic doctrine about the convertibility of the transcendentals. He formulates this idea with the following words: "*Unum enim, ens, verum, bonum convertuntur*."³⁹ The reason for their convertibility is that all of them can name God in the full sense. He accentuates also the convertibility of Truth with Being as well as the convertibility of Being with Truth: "*Verum et ens convertuntur*."⁴⁰ Based on this convertibility Eckhart understands truth not only as the truth of a sentence, but also as the truth of Being, that is, truth receives an ontological status through its convertibility with *ens* and connotes the truth of Being. It also concerns *bonum*, which receives ontological status through the convertibility with *ens* and connotes the goodness of Being.⁴¹ So truth has epistemological as well as ontological meaning: what is true, also *is*. Goodness expresses the ethical as well as the ontological sense: what is good, also *is*. On the other hand, the meaning of *ens* attains epistemological and ethical dimensions that are based on convertibility with truth and goodness: what is,

³⁸ See Meister Eckhart, *Prologus in Opus propositionum*, n. 4, LW I, 168, 2–4: "cum dico hoc ens aut unum hoc aut unum istud, verum hoc et istud, li hoc et istud nihil prorsus addunt seu adiciunt entitatis, unitatis, veritatis aut bonitatis super ens, unum, verum, bonum."

³⁹ See Meister Eckhart, *Expositio sancti evangelii secundum Iohannem*, n. 114, LW III, 99, 6.

⁴⁰ Meister Eckhart, *Liber parabolarum Genesis*, n. 188, LW I, ed. Karl Weiß (Stuttgart: 1964), 659, 8; See also Meister Eckhart, *Expositio libri Exodi*, n. 29, LW II, 35, 7.

⁴¹ See Meister Eckhart, *Expositio libri Genesis*, LW I, ed. Karl Weiß (Stuttgart: 1964), 189, 5: "bonum et ens convertuntur."

is cognizable; what is, *is* good. From such a connotation arises the correlation between the sphere of ontology, epistemology, and ethics. This correlation allows Eckhart to abolish the border between *perfectiones generales* and *perfectiones spirituales*, which is evident on the example of the relation: "justice—the just man" (*iustitia—iustus*).⁴²

6. TRANSCENDENTALS AS THE BASIS OF ECKHART'S ONTOLOGY

Eckhart's main theses are "*esse est deus*" (one also finds another formulation "*deus est esse*") and "*deus est unus*." With these definitions that refer to God, he integrates the henological and ontological discourses about God. Hence, Eckhart follows the Christian contemplative tradition that was strongly influenced by Proclus and the *Liber de causis*. The integration of henological and ontological discourses builds the following ontological scheme: God is Being (*esse*) per se as well as One (*unum*) per se. The One per se means unity, the unity of essence, or even the essential unity. The One as essential unity is without relationality in itself, but as such it is the grounding ground of all entities even through its relationality.⁴³ God as relationless and the One is the unique One in which one does not find difference (i.e. the difference according to the persons): God as the unique One is neither Father, nor Son, nor Holy Spirit. God as *something* means that God is completely free from the definite modes of divine Being. So, he is the simple One. The simple One is undefined and simple by comparison with the modes of Trinity. It is determined essentially through its simple and One-Being. Therefore, the simple One, as the positive in regard to the mode of triplicity of being, is negative at the same time as it itself presents the defining moment of being. Eckhart overrides this positive negativity or negative positivity of the One with the idea of God's birth: in theological discourse he formulates that in the simple One, Father gives birth to Son. This idea expressed in philosophical discourse can be stated as follows: the *Unum* is constitutive for the *Esse*.

⁴² In his monograph, Burkhard Mojsisch discusses this kind of relation as paradigmatic for Eckhart's thinking. See Burkhard Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart. Analogie, Univoxität und Einheit* (Hamburg: 1983), 65–70.

⁴³ B. Mojsisch outlines that the relationless One, which is the grounding ground and is characterized by the relationality, is cohesive with the theory of essence of Jacob von Metz. See Burkhard Mojsisch, "*Perfectiones spirituales*—Meister Eckharts Theorie der geistigen Vollkommenheiten. Mit möglichkeitsphilosophischen Reflexion," in *Die Logik des Transzendentalen*, ed. Martin Pickavé (note 13 above).

Father and Son are related to each other. They are to be thought of as Father and as Son only in this relation. At the same time, they relate to each other reciprocally: one is not to think of the Father without the Son nor the Son without Father. If the Son is, so too is the Father, and if the Father exists, so too does the Son.⁴⁴ Therefore, one cannot think of any time in which the Father would exist without the Son.⁴⁵

The concept of Trinity contains in itself the concepts of otherness (*Andersheit*) and difference (*Verschiedenheit*): Son is the other of Father. Although he has the one being (*esse*) with him, as Son he is different from the Father. This difference between the hypostases of Trinity is denied in the concept of the One (*unum*), because the concept of *unum* denies the plurality, hence, the negation of definite Being (*ens*). In Eckhart's works, the transcendental One receives the meaning of the negation of negation (*unum est negatio negationis*).⁴⁶

In his contribution, *Negatio negationis*, Karl Hedwig explains how to understand the negation of negation. He claims that from the negation of definite Being there results the negation of negation itself:⁴⁷ the definite Being implicates in itself already the negation, because every definite being means that this one *is not* the other definite being. And so it is through its definiteness of being that it is different from other beings. Therefore the negation of definite Being, which implicates in itself already the one negation (negation of other definite beings) means negation of negation. Hence, the negation of negation is the negation of different beings, which implicates the double negation to outline the indifferent *prius* of Being itself.⁴⁸ The One (*unum*) or the unity (*unitas*) are the explications of the uniqueness of God. The *unum* in the form of double negation exceeds being and is the basis of the purity from being which is "beyond-being."⁴⁹

⁴⁴ See Meister Eckhart, *Expositio sancti evangelii secundum Iohannem*, n. 197, LW III, 166, 10ff.: "Pater enim et filius opponuntur relative: in quantum opponuntur, distinguuntur, sed in quantum relative, mutuo se ponunt; nec est nec intelligitur pater sine filio et e converso, et per consequens filius non excludit nec tacet, sed enaret patrem esset patrem."

⁴⁵ See Meister Eckhart, *Expositio sancti evangelii secundum Iohannem*, n. 198, LW III, 167, 8–10: "Enarrat enim omne quod est absolutum et unum in divinis, et omne quod est distinctionis et relationis, quae duo praedicamenta, substantia scilicet et relatio, sola in divinis admittuntur."

⁴⁶ See Meister Eckhart, *Prologus in Opus propositionum*, n. 6, LW I, 169, 6: "Praeterea li unum est negatio negationis."

⁴⁷ See Karl Hedwig, "Negatio negationis, Problemgeschichtliche Aspekte einer Denkstruktur," in *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 24 (Hamburg: 1955), 7–33, see 10.

⁴⁸ See Karl Hedwig, "Negatio negationis, Problemgeschichtliche Aspekte einer Denkstruktur."

⁴⁹ See Norbert Winkler, *Meister Eckhart zur Einführung* (Hamburg: 1997), 55.

The following remark of Eckhart is important for the understanding of negation as implicated in the term of the transcendental One.

One transcendental sounds like a certain negation, but in its sense since it is a negation of a negation, it is a pure affirmation.⁵⁰

Thus, according to Eckhart, the negation, which is implicated in the term of the transcendental One, is only a matter of rhetorical expression, while in actuality it is an affirmation, and even the highest affirmation: *negatio negationis est purissima affirmatio*.⁵¹

The simple negation denies being. Through the negation of negation or in the pure affirmation, what is supposed in denotation, in being, is approved. So affirmed, being is identified with the absolute being, that is, God. This idea is expressed in the German and in the Latin works of Eckhart:

Pr. 21: But God is a negation of negation; he is one and negates everything other, for outside God is nothing.⁵²

Prol. in Op. prop.: Because of this it contains the one alone and fullness of being such as is God, concerning which nothing can be negated since God includes and precontains all being at once.⁵³

As the negation expresses nothing,⁵⁴ the affirmation—that is, the opposite of nothing—expresses being (*esse*). While ontological status is denied for all creatures through nothing, being as such can apply only to God. Thus, the affirmation as the expression of being is not to be understood as the only kind of verbal expression, but as one that has ontological meaning in itself. This is indicated in the following sentence, which expresses the opposition of affirmative and negative: *Omnia enim, universalis*

⁵⁰ Meister Eckhart, *Sermones et lectiones super Eccl. c. 24:23–31*, ed. H. Fischer and J. Koch, LW II (Stuttgart: 1954), 293, 1–2.

⁵¹ See Meister Eckhart, *Expositio libri Exodi*, n. 16, LW II, 21, 7–8: “Item est negatio negationis, quae est purissima affirmatio et plenitudo termini affirmati.”

⁵² Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 21*, in *Meister Eckhart. Die deutschen und die lateinischen Werke, herausgegeben im Auftrag der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft. Die deutschen Werke*, ed. Josef Quint and Georg Steer (Stuttgart: 1936ff.) (abbrev. DW), DW I, ed. Josef Quint (Stuttgart: 1958), 363, 7–8: Pr. 21: “Aber got hât ein versagen der versagennes; er ist ein und versaget alle aner, wan niht ûzer gote ennist.”

⁵³ Meister Eckhart, *Prologus in Opus propositionum*, LW I, 169, 6–8: “Propter quod soli primo et pleno esse, quale est deus competit, de quo nihil negari potest, eo quod omne esse simul prae habeat et includat.”

⁵⁴ See Karl Albert, *Meister Eckharts These vom Sein. Untersuchungen zur Metaphysik des Opus tripartitum* (Kastellaun: 1976), 140.

affirmativa, et nihil, universalis negativa, opponuntur.⁵⁵ Through this contradiction arise the following contradictory correlations:

Affirmation—negation
 Affirmation—nothing
 Being—nothing
 Being—negation

And conversely:

Negation—affirmation
 Nothing—affirmation
 Nothing—being
 Negation—Being

These contradictory terms are not only correlatively related, but can also be taken up into each other and make for a specific kind of dialectics. Because—as we read in *Expositio libri Exodi*—each negation is based on the affirmation, the affirmation (accordingly the being) is overridden in the negation (accordingly to nothing), but through this also nothing is affirmatively appropriated. The negation (accordingly nothing) is overridden in the affirmation (accordingly in being), but through this also the affirmation is negatively appropriated. This reciprocal overriding of the opposite extremes builds the foundation for the fact that the affirmation that follows from the negation of negation. It presents the highest being, which includes in itself the already overridden negativity and although or even through this remains in opposition to this negativity. Such comparison of the oppositions can be identified as *oppositio oppositorum sine oppositione* (this concept is developed by Nicolaus Cusanus who was influenced by Meister Eckhart).⁵⁶ This kind of opposition does not mean

⁵⁵ Meister Eckhart, *Expositio libri Exodi*, LW II, 36, 15.

⁵⁶ On the relation between the concept of negativity of Meister Eckhart and Nicolas of Cusa, see also B. Mojsisch, "Nichts und Negation. Meister Eckhart und Nikolaus von Kues," in *Historia Philosophiae Medii Aevi. Studien zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, vol. 2, ed. B. Mojsisch and O. Pluta (Amsterdam: 1991), 675–93. Reiner Manstetten uses the term *oppositio oppositorum sine oppositione* for characterization of relation between the Being and the Nothing in Eckhart's metaphysics. According to Manstetten we can understand Eckhart's words about the *nihil* as the *oppositum* of being (*esse*) as follows: nothing is in opposition to Being or nothing is opposed to Being. Both expressions give Eckhart's intention. Manstetten stresses that the problem of this opinion in the both cases is that usually we understand *oppositum* as the *aliquid*, something. According to Manstetten,

controversy (since it is *sine oppositione*), but the reciprocal transcending of *opposita*.

Being per se can be only the negation of negation, because it is not "this and that Being," but instead depicts their negation. As the particular Being, the "this and that being" is defined through the fact that it denies the definite being of all other particular beings.⁵⁷ The indefinite being is the expression of the totality of being that is not preceded by anything and cannot be preceded by anything.⁵⁸

7. CONCLUSION

Through the assumption that Being, One, Truth, and Goodness as terms and as the abstract designations are convertible, Eckhart, in his metaphysics, arranges the correlation between the ontological, henological, ethical, and epistemological levels. The convertibility of the transcendentals is connected with the idea of participation. This means that everything has being, one-being, true-being, and good-being only from God.⁵⁹ With the equation of the transcendentals with the divine persons, Meister Eckhart realizes his intention mentioned in the *Expositio sancti evangelii secundum Iohannem*: by equating the transcendentals with the persons of the Trinity he integrates the theological and metaphysical domains. Thus, he constitutes the new dimension in the Christian contemplative tradition. This dimension of contemplation can be understood only in consideration of the semantic maxim: *Aliter sentiendum est de ente et aliter de ente hoc et hoc*.

Eckhart denies that in this case the *oppositum* is something. See Reiner Manstetten, *Esse est deus. Meister Eckharts christologische Versöhnung von Philosophie und Religion und ihre Ursprünge in der Tradition des Abendlandes* (Munich: 1993), 213.

⁵⁷ Meister Eckhart, *Prologus in Opus propositionum*, n. 12, LW I, 172, 12–15: "Praeter sicut supra tactum est, enti sive de ente nihil negari potest sive nullum esse negari potest, sed competit ipsi negatio negationis esse. Ita uni nihil unum sive nulla unitas negari potest nisi negatio<ne> negationis unitatis aut unius; similiter de vero et bono."

⁵⁸ On the totality of being in Meister Eckhart's work see Andrés Quero-Sánchez, "Sein als Absolutheit (*esse* als *abegescheidenheit*)," in *Meister Eckharts Straßburger Jahrzehnt*, ed. Andrés Quero-Sánchez and Georg Steer, *Meister-Eckhart-Jahrbuch* 2 (Stuttgart: 2008), 189–218.

⁵⁹ See Meister Eckhart, *Prologus in Opus propositionum*, n. 9, LW I, 170, 9–10: "Secundum inter quattuor, scilicet quod a solo deo omnia habent esse, unum esse et verum esse et bonum esse."

FROM AQUINAS TO ECKHART ON CREATION, CREATURE, AND ANALOGY

Jeremiah Hackett and Jennifer Hart Weed

INTRODUCTION

Meister Eckhart's doctrine of analogy has long been recognized by scholars as central both to his philosophy of Being and to his self-defense against the Cologne Inquisition (1326–27). It is commonly accepted that Eckhart's interpretation of analogy "is closely connected to that of Thomas, even if it is so in a very one-directional manner."¹ Heribert Fischer, the one-time editor of Eckhart's Latin works, states that Eckhart's quoted examples on analogy are for the most part taken over verbatim from Aquinas.² Alain de Libera has emphasized the important uses by Eckhart of central texts on analogy from Aquinas, and Ruedi Imbach has outlined the connection between Aquinas and Eckhart on the doctrine of Being.³

The aim of this chapter is to present a select review of modern research (1980–2010) on Eckhart's doctrine of analogy, especially in relation to Thomas Aquinas. As part of this review, an introductory section by Jennifer Hart Weed will set up the present context in modern American scholarship

¹ W. Kluxen, "Analogie," in *Historisches Wörterbuch Der Philosophie*, vol. 1, ed. Joachim Ritter (Basel: 1971), 223: "Aus der nachthomasischen Scholastik sei zunächst Meister Eckhart, der an Thomas anknüpft, wenngleich in sehr einseitiger Weise, die auch sein Verständnis der A. kennzeichnet. Nach dem Modell des 'Gesunden' kommt dem Vorzugeordneten *allein* das 'gemeinsame' zu, dem Nachgeordneten nicht einmal der Ansatz zu der Form, auf der das Verhältnis beruht. So ist das Sein, das Gott eigen ist, im Geschöpf als 'Sein von einem anderen her und (als) in einem anderen' (esse ab altero et in altero) [1]. Das Geschöpf ist in sich nichts, aber dann last sich umgekehrt sagen: Das Sein in ihm ist unmittelbar Sein Gottes. Die A. wird damit *Dialektisch*."

² Heribert Fischer, *Meister Eckhart* (Freiburg: 1974), 118: "Die Ausführungen zur Analogie sind zu einem großen Teil wortwörtlich von Eckhart aus Thomas übernommen, und zwar aus dessen Sentenzenkommentar 1 d. 22, q. un. A.3 ad 2" (LW II, 280, 5 and note 5. See also Heribert Fischer, "Thomas Von Aquin und Meister Eckhart," *Theologie und Philosophie* 49 (1974), 213–35.

³ Alain de Libera, *Le Probleme De L'être Chez Maître Eckhart: Logique et Metaphysique de L'Analogie*, (Cahier De La Revue De Theologie et De Philosophie) 4 (Geneva: 1980), 1–63, see 4–8; Ruedi Imbach, *Deus est Intelligere: Das Verhältnis von Sein und Denken in seiner Bedeutung für das Gottesverständnis bei Thomas Von Aquin und in der Pariser Questionen Meister Eckharts* (Fribourg: 1976).

on the issues of analogy in Aquinas.⁴ This is required since some earlier accounts of Eckhart in relation to Thomas Aquinas were made against the background of Renaissance Thomism, especially in terms of Thomas de Vio's (Cajetan's) interpretation of proper proportionality. Also, some modern studies of Eckhart limit attention to Aquinas's early account of analogy in his *Commentary on the Sentences*. As we will see, this latter work was not Aquinas's final word on analogy, and for Eckhart the interpretation of analogy in the *Summa contra gentiles* and the *Summa Theologiae* was of central importance. Analogy finds its place in Aquinas and Eckhart in terms of explaining the doctrine of creation and creatures. It was never intended to be an independent treatise on analogy.⁵ Both authors presupposed and used the treatises on logic from the schools, especially the sections on signification and equivocation. Hence, analogy has a central theological role in dealing with scriptural and patristic interpretations of the dynamic interaction of Creator and creature. In other words, the doctrine of the transcendence and immanence of God in the world conditions their approach to the issue of analogy.

Some modern Thomist interpretations of Eckhart on analogy exhibit a strong bias against Eckhart's doctrine, holding that his position is deficient in comparison with Aquinas's treatment. Etienne Gilson notes that "Even while they are participating in their source, the analogues have nothing of the form they receive *positively rooted in them*... Being is, so to speak, imputed to beings by God without ever becoming their own being, about the same way as, in Luther's theology, justice will be imputed to the just without ever becoming their own justice."⁶ Both Bernard J. Muller-Thym and Gerard B. Phelan insisted that the doctrine of the analogy of proper proportionality overcomes the limitations of a doctrine of mere external attribution in Eckhart and the doctrine of symbolic predication in Maimonides.⁷ Cornelio Fabro has provided a particularly negative account of Eckhart on analogy.⁸ More recently, W. Norris Clarke, SJ, in his handbook

⁴ But see the new work by Joshua P. Hochschild, *The Semantics of Analogy: Re-Reading Cajetan's De Nominum Analogia* (Notre Dame: 2010) for a rehabilitation of Cajetan on analogy of proper proportionality.

⁵ G.P. Klubertanz, *St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy* (Chicago: 1960), 111.

⁶ Etienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (London: 1955), 441.

⁷ G.B. Phelan, "St. Thomas and Analogy," in G.B. Phelan, *Selected Papers*, ed. Arthur G. Kirn, CSB (Toronto: 1967), 121; Bernard Muller-Thym, *The Universality of Being in Meister Eckhart of Hochheim* (New York: 1939), 68.

⁸ Cornelio Fabro, CPS, *Participation et Causalité Selon S. Thomas D'Aquin* (Louvain-Paris: 1961), 565–67: "Allieurs pourtant Eckhart admet plus ouvertement une analogie d'attribution, bien que purement extrinseque... Eckhart ignore 'l'esse participatum' de

on contemporary Thomistic metaphysics, contrasts Aquinas's *analogy of participation* which "combines in one complex model both the analogous structure of proper proportionality (intrinsic similarity between all the analogates) plus the analogy of attribution (the relation of causal participation of many different analogates to a common source)"⁹ with other positions including those of Eckhart and Maimonides. Eckhart is seen to belong to the so-called "*Negative Theology*," where God is the mystery that can only be pointed at "in silence or in metaphor," while "Maimonides states very clearly the total inaccessibility of God to our concepts and words."¹⁰ The advances in Eckhart research during the past 40 or so years makes it imperative that some of these negative judgements be reconsidered.

It is very clear from recent Eckhart scholarship that Augustine, Aquinas, and Maimonides had a significant influence on Eckhart's doctrine on naming God.¹¹ We are now in a much better situation to appreciate Maimonides's influence on Eckhart than was heretofore the case. It is important to begin with Aquinas's doctrine of analogy (stripped of its later Renaissance overlay), so that Aquinas, the one to whom Eckhart appeals as a model during the Cologne process, can be seen in clearer medieval light un-shaded by later Renaissance interpretation.

As noted above in reference to earlier scholarship, it has been common to assign to Eckhart nothing but a doctrine of the analogy of external attribution.¹² This model of external attribution could then quite easily be contrasted with Aquinas's doctrine of intrinsic participation. And this in turn may have led to a very schematic and simplified comparison of Aquinas and Eckhart. Scholarly labels have helped cover over the complexity of the subject matter.

saint Thomas, qui se compose avec l'essence." Fabro sees Eckhart's position as a Neoplatonism dominated by Aristotle which logically leads to the position of Hegel.

⁹ W. Norris Clarke, SJ, *The One and the Many: A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysics* (Notre Dame: 2001), 56.

¹⁰ W. Norris Clarke, SJ, *The One and the Many: A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysics*, 53.

¹¹ See Yosef Schwartz's chapter in the present volume with regard to Maimonides' influence on Aquinas and Eckhart in terms of naming God.

¹² Joseph Koch, "Zur Analogielehre Meister Eckharts," in *Mélanges offerts à Etienne Gilson* (Paris: 1959), 327–50. Karl Albert, *Meister Eckhart's These vom Sein: Untersuchungen zur Metaphysik des Opus Tripartitum* (Kastellaun: 1976); Vladimir Lossky, *Théologie négative et connaissance de Dieu chez Maître Eckhart* (Paris: 1960); Bernhard Welte, *Meister Eckhart: Gedanken zu seinem Gedanken* (Freiburg: 1979). Beginning with Joseph Koch, one has a challenge to the view that Eckhart holds a purely extrinsic theory of analogy of attribution. Greater emphasis was placed on the notion of intrinsic attribution by Bernhard Welte and later scholars.

I. THOMAS AQUINAS: NAMING GOD BY ANALOGY—PRESENT STARTING POINTS (JENNIFER HART WEED)

In this section, I will turn my attention to Aquinas's account of the analogy of names between creatures and God. According to Aquinas, human beings cannot know God's nature or essence, but they can know him through his effects (e.g. creatures, other created things, etc.). So the foundation for the naming of God is the causal relation that obtains between God's creation and himself. Aquinas argues that effects always resemble their efficient or agent causes, and so creatures resemble their creator.¹³ This resemblance is due to a shared perfection:¹⁴

God alone is good essentially. For everything is called good according to its perfection. Now perfection of a thing is threefold; first, according to the constitution of its own being; secondly, in respect of any accidents being added as necessary for its perfect operation . . . Thus, for instance, the first perfection of fire consists in its existence, which it has through its own substantial form; its secondary perfection consists in heat, lightness and dryness . . . This . . . perfection belongs to no creature by its own essence; it belongs to God only, in Whom alone essence is existence; in Whom there are no accidents; since whatever belongs to others accidentally belongs to Him essentially, as, to be powerful, wise, and the like.¹⁵

According to Aquinas, all perfections are derived from God. However, perfections exist in God in a more eminent mode than in a creature and so the creature will be less perfect than God. Aquinas subscribes also to the doctrine of simplicity such that God is considered to be without intrinsic accidental properties.¹⁶ Consequently, propositions such as "God is good," in which *good* is an intrinsic accidental property, would be ruled out by divine simplicity. When one says, "God is good," one is asserting that some property of *goodness* is a property of God. But if the doctrine of divine simplicity is true, then it is impossible that God can have the intrinsic accidental property *goodness*. Instead, Aquinas argues that God does not have the property of *goodness*. *God is goodness essentially*. That is, God's essence includes *goodness* and God is identical with his essence. Thus,

¹³ St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Ia.12.8.

¹⁴ Jennifer Hart Weed, "Creation as a Foundation of Analogy in Aquinas," in *Divine Transcendence and Immanence in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Harm Goris, Herwi Rikhof, and Henk Schoot (Leuven: 2009), 129–48.

¹⁵ Aquinas, *ST* Ia.6.3.

¹⁶ For a contemporary defense of the doctrine of divine simplicity, see Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (New York: 2003).

when one predicates an intrinsic accidental property of God, one is speaking falsely, for God does not have such properties.

Consequently, Aquinas defends an analogical approach to naming God and he differentiates this view from at least two alternatives. First, when things are named equivocally, they share a common name that has different definitions in each case.¹⁷ Second, when things are named univocally, they share a common name and a common definition.¹⁸ Aquinas's analogical approach is a "mean" between "pure equivocation" and "simple univocation" because it affirms that there is some similarity between God's names and the names of creatures, but it also admits very significant distinctions between the two:

And so whatever is said of God and creatures is said according to some relation from the creature to God, as to a principle and cause, in whom all the perfections of things pre-exist excellently. And this mode of commonality is a mean between pure equivocation and simple univocation. For what is in these analogues is not one *ratio*, as it is in univocals, nor [are the *ratios*] completely different as in equivocals; but the name that is said with multiple senses signifies different relations to some one thing, just as the word *healthy* said of urine signifies the sign of health in an animal and the same word said of medicine signifies that it is the cause of that same health.¹⁹

So, perfection terms such as "good" are said of creatures and of God analogously. In the case of God, "God is good" means "God is super-good" or "God is perfectly good." The affirmative name is interpreted to mean that the perfection in question is super-eminently in God. But "God is super-good" is an imperfect expression insofar as it implies a distinction between God and the attribute of goodness. Owing to divine simplicity, there can be no distinction between God and any attribute. So strictly speaking, "God is super-good" is not an accurate reflection of God's goodness.

Aquinas's distinction between the mode of signification of the name (*modus significandi*), and the thing signified by the name (*res significata*)

¹⁷ Ralph McInerny, *Aquinas and Analogy* (Washington, D.C.: 1996), 86.

¹⁸ McInerny, *Aquinas and Analogy*, 91.

¹⁹ *ST* Ia.13.5. "Et sic quiddam dicitur de Deo et creaturis, dicitur secundum quod est aliquis ordo creaturae ad Deum, ut ad principium et causam, in qua praeexistunt excellenter omnes rerum perfectiones. Et iste modus communitatis medius est inter puram aequivocationem et simplicem univocationem. Neque enim in his quae analogice dicuntur, est una ratio, sicut est in univocis; nec totaliter diversa, sicut in aequivocis; sed nomen quod sic multipliciter dicitur significat diversas proportionem ad aliquid unum; sicut sanum, de urina dictum significat signum sanitatis animalis, de medicina vero dictum significat causam eiusdem sanitatis." [Ed. This fundamental example of analogy, as we will see below, will be of crucial importance for Eckhart and will require careful interpretation.]

is central to his account of analogous names. The thing signified by the name (*res significata*), and the mode of signification of the name (*modus significandi*), are both components of the *ratio* signified by a name.²⁰ According to Aquinas, analogous terms are not *purely* equivocal terms; yet they are a kind of equivocal term. Equivocal efficient causes do not share the same *ratio* with their effects. However, in analogical causal relationships there is some relation between the *ratio* found in the effect and the *ratio* found in the cause.

As Ralph McInerny explains, when an analogous term receives several accounts (*ratio*), these accounts are related in such a way that the primary or most obvious meaning “acts as a control” over the other meanings of the term.²¹ That is, the proper meaning of the term, *ratio propria*, is found primarily in one of the analogates and the other analogate is named in relation to it.²² So, for example, “healthy” is said of medicine and an animal because the healing properties of medicine precede health in the animal. But the *ratio propria* (“health” understood as meaning “health of the animal”) is not found in both of the analogates.²³ It is found primarily in the animal and said of medicine in relation to the animal.²⁴ It bears repeating that the thing signified by the name (*res significata*) insofar as it is signified, and the mode of signification of the name (*modus significandi*), are both components of the *ratio* signified by a name.²⁵

According to Aquinas, names that are applied to God properly are applied through the relation that holds between God and creatures, and these names,

²⁰ McInerny, *Aquinas and Analogy*, 127.

²¹ McInerny, *Aquinas and Analogy*, 278. As Norman Kretzmann pointed out, “*ratio*” can be translated as “*meaning, definition, concept, model, and essential nature.*” Norman Kretzmann, *The Metaphysics of Theism* (Oxford: 1997), 149.

²² McInerny, *Aquinas and Analogy*, 114. [See below for Eckhart’s use of health in the animal as the focal meaning, and the analogous use of the word health for urine as *sign* of health, and medicine as *cause* of health.]

²³ McInerny, *Aquinas and Analogy*, 101. McInerny claims that this view is explicitly in contradiction to Cajetan’s interpretation of Aquinas, since Cajetan interpreted Aquinas as thinking that the *ratio propria* is identical in each of the analogates thus conflating the distinction between analogy and univocity. Much has been written by Thomists against the Cajetanist interpretation of Aquinas. In addition to McInerny, *Aquinas and Analogy*, see George P. Klubertanz, SJ, *St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy* (Chicago: 1960), 7–10, 39 note 5, 102 note 32, 120–23; and Hampus Lyttkens, *The Analogy between God and the World* (Uppsala: 1952), 205–16, 218–23, 254. However, Lyttkens does not appear to identify Cajetan’s mistake as thinking that the *ratio propria* is found in both analogates. On this topic, see Lyttkens, *The Analogy between God and the World*, 254.

²⁴ Lyttkens, *The Analogy between God and the World*.

²⁵ Lyttkens, *The Analogy between God and the World*, 127.

Are applied to God not only causally but also essentially. When we say, *God is good* or *God is wise*, these names do not only signify that He is the cause of wisdom or goodness, but that these things pre-exist in Him more eminently. Thus, according to the thing signified (*rem significatam*) by the name, these names are said primarily of God rather than creatures, since all such perfections flow from God to creatures. But with respect to the imposition of names, they are imposed by us primarily on creatures, which we know primarily. But these names have the mode of signification (*modum significandi*) that is suitable for creatures, as was said above.²⁶

Thus, the *res significata* of perfection terms such as “goodness” belongs properly to God and more so to God than to creatures. Thus, it is applied primarily to God and secondarily to creatures.²⁷ In contrast, the *modus significandi* do not properly apply to God. The divine mode cannot be expressed properly in human language; the *modus significandi* of human language is inherently defective with respect to God. One might suspect with respect to perfection terms that the *res significata* is applied univocally between God and creatures. But recall that things are named univocally when they have both the same name and the same definition or *ratio*.²⁸ Both *res significata* and *modus significandi* make up the *ratio* of a name. According to Aquinas’s theory of analogy, however, in the case of perfection terms applied to God and to creatures, the *res significata* of a thing insofar as it is signified would be the same, but the *modus significandi* would be different.²⁹ So although it might appear that the *res significata* is applied univocally, that is not the case. The *res significata* would be the same, but they would not be predicated univocally of God and creatures.

In considering Eckhart’s doctrine of analogy below, this important distinction and the crucial example of the “healthy animal” as the main analogate will take on new importance. Eckhart takes Aquinas’s examples, supplements them, and gives them his own interpretation. Prior to a discussion of Eckhart’s interpretation, it is imperative that we provide an

²⁶ ST Ia.13.6. “Nomina non solum dicuntur de Deo causaliter, sed etiam essentialiter. Cum enim dicitur Deus est bonus, vel sapiens, non solum significatur quod ipse sit causa sapientiae vel bonitatis, sed quod haec in eo eminentius praeexistunt. Unde, secundum hoc, dicendum est quod quantum ad rem significatam per nomen, per prius dicuntur de Deo quam de creaturis, quia a Deo huiusmodi perfectiones in creaturas manant. Sed quantum ad impositionem nominis, per prius a nobis imponuntur creaturis, qua prius cognoscimus. Unde et modum significandi habent qui competit creaturis, ut supra dictum est.”

²⁷ ST Ia.13.6.

²⁸ McInerney, *Aquinas and Analogy*, 91.

²⁹ McInerney, *Aquinas and Analogy*, 99.

abbreviated selection of the main texts with commentary. These texts are not as well known to the general reader as they should be. Eckhart's texts must take precedence over doctrinal summary.

II. THE CENTRAL TEXTS IN ECKHART

Recent Eckhart scholarship has drawn attention to the importance of Eckhart's *Defense* document from the Inquisition process for an understanding of the role of analogy in his account of Being.³⁰ It is clear that a proper understanding of Aquinas on analogy and an appreciation of the logic of reduplication (*in quantum*) are central to Eckhart's self-defense. Remove Eckhart's careful distinctions and any inquisitor, medieval or modern, can find whatever they desire in Eckhart.

a) *Rechtsfertigungsschrift/Defense Document*

In the *Defense Document* Eckhart makes explicit his membership in the Albertine and Thomist tradition of philosophical analysis. And so, he is conscious that it is not just he himself as a person who is being accused of heresy. The very philosophical-theological tradition to which he belongs is likewise being accused:

The second is that the good man and goodness are one. The good man insofar as he is good *signifies* goodness, just as something white *signifies* only the quality of whiteness. These two things, being good and goodness, *are univocally one* in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are *analogically one* in God and in us considered as good.³¹

Third, they object to things as heretical that Saint Thomas openly uses for the solution of certain arguments and that they have either not seen or not remembered. An example is the distinction and nature of univocal, equivocal and analogous terms, and the like.³²

We cannot assume that Eckhart's inquisitors ever thought about univocality, equivocity, and analogous terms in the manner of Aquinas. Analogy

³⁰ Angela Schifffhauer, "*nos filii dei sumus analogice* . . . Die Analogielehre Meister Eckharts in der Verteidigungsschrift," in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt*, ed. Andreas Speer and Lydia Wegener, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 32 (Berlin: 2005), 356–92.

³¹ "Documents Relating to Eckhart's Condemnation," in *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, ed. Edmund Colledge OSA and Bernard McGinn (Mahwah, N.J.: 1981), 73.

³² "Documents Relating to Eckhart's Condemnation," 75. This is not the only polemical use of Thomas and indeed of Albert the Great by Eckhart in these documents.

here is not a simple comparison of shared characteristics on the horizontal level. It is far more likely that the inquisitors held to a position much like that of Henry of Ghent, where an analogous term is totally indeterminate but is then used in a determinate manner whether finite or infinite.³³ Further, we cannot assume that the inquisitors shared or acknowledged Eckhart's own subtle uses of the semantic doctrine of *signification*. Some modern interpretations of Eckhart's doctrine of signification, like some medieval interpretations, tend towards nominalism and ignore Eckhart's Platonic realism, as for example in his understanding of the priority of whiteness for the white thing.

b) *Parisian Questions and the Opus tripartitum*

Eckhart set out his academic program in terms of propositions, questions (based on Aquinas's *Summa theologiae*), and commentaries and sermons on the books of the Old and New Testaments. The extant *Parisian Questions*, the tabula and prologues to the *Opus tripartitum* provide the essential philosophical and theological guidelines for the interpretation of the biblical texts.³⁴ There is an inner coherence between Eckhart's program and the laying out of that program in the commentaries and sermons on Scripture. Unfortunately, we lack a full formal treatment of analogy from the *Questions*.

c) *Commentaries on Genesis*

Eckhart is very explicit about his own method of abbreviated and "selective interpretation" of texts. Indeed, he refers the listener/reader to the tradition of biblical interpretation and implores them to ensure that "the better and more useful interpretations that the saints and venerable teachers, particularly Brother Thomas, have written are not neglected."³⁵ Hence, we must assume on the part of Eckhart's Dominican audience the knowledge of the commentaries on Scripture by Thomas Aquinas, Albert, and others. Eckhart was addressing an intellectually capable audience where careful distinctions could be made and be understood.

³³ For Henry of Ghent on analogy, see Jos Decorte, "Henry of Ghent on Analogy: Critical Reflections on Jean Paulus's Interpretation," in *Henry of Ghent: Proceedings of the 70th Anniversary of his Death* (1293), ed. W. Vanhamel (Leuven: 1996), 71–105.

³⁴ Meister Eckhart, *Parisian Questions and Prologues*, trans. Armand A. Maurer (Toronto: 1974). Meister Eckhart, *Quaestiones Parisiensis*, LW, Band 5, II, ed. L. Sturlese, 1988.

³⁵ Eckhart, *Prologue to the Work of Expositions I*, in Colledge and McGinn, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons*, 82.

It is not possible to quote here from both commentaries on Genesis, but it is clear that the doctrine of creation/creature explained there is directly relevant to the problem of analogy: the creation of all things "in the Principle." "God acts and produces things through his divine nature. But God's nature is intellect, and for him existence is in the understanding. Therefore, he produces all things in existence through intellect."³⁶

One aspect of the *Book of the Parables of Genesis* is often overlooked. Eckhart states that "Plato himself and all the ancient theologians and poets generally used to teach about God, nature, and ethics by means of parables. The poets did not speak in an empty and fabulous way, but they intentionally and very attractively and properly taught about the nature of things divine, natural, and ethical by metaphors and allegories."³⁷ The issue here is whether these "metaphors and allegories" are to be interpreted in a modern sense with the implication that poetic language does not have proper signification or whether they must be interpreted in terms of Eckhart's complex semantics in its service to his metaphysical vision. Eckhart relates the parabolic manner of instruction to Christ, and speaks of the mystical way of interpretation in the *Glossa*. He notes that a good example of this is found in "the citation of *Question 102 of the Prima Secunda of the Summa*." Again, Eckhart points to the virtues and principles of the sciences, to metaphysics, physics, ethics, and the universal forms. Included in the discussion are the emanation of the divine persons and the production of creatures from their exemplars.

Eckhart provides a very important account of the contrast between the active heavens and the passive recipient earth. This is crucial for Eckhart's invocation of the analogical example of the light penetrating the air such that, without the light, the air would be nothing in itself. Thus, just as one can speak of Aquinas's analogical world, so too one can speak of Eckhart's analogical world. Eckhart's interpretation is clearly a development of what Aquinas had written on analogy.

This natural philosophical phenomenon is important for understanding Eckhart's doctrine of formal perfections. Again, heaven and earth are related as form and matter:

³⁶ Eckhart, *The Commentaries on the Book of Genesis*, Colledge and McGinn, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons*, 86.

³⁷ Eckhart, *The Commentaries on the Book of Genesis*, Colledge and McGinn, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons*, 93.

Heaven is understood as the existence that created things have in their original causes (think of color in light and heat in the sun), and "earth" is taken as the formal existence things have in themselves.³⁸

Eckhart proceeds to give the example of justice and the just man. "Justice manifests everything that belongs to it through itself and manifests its total self in itself without any medium. It opens, unfolds, and pours all this into the just man insofar as he is just. It would be wicked to divide justice in half, for half-justice is no justice. This manifestation and opening up is an utterance, a word, a messenger . . . Justice justifies by speaking; the just man is justified by hearing justice."³⁹ This theme has a number of implications for the doctrine of analogy.

d) *The Commentary on the Book of Wisdom*

As we will see below in a critical review of commentary on Eckhart's texts, these selections from the *Commentary on the Book of Wisdom*⁴⁰ are of great importance for an understanding of the Unity of God.

Texts

154. Accordingly, it should be noted that nothing is so distinct from number and the thing numbered or what is numerable (the created thing that is) as God is. And yet nothing is so indistinct. [Eckhart gives three reasons]

155. On the other hand, it must be noted that nothing is so one and indistinct as God and every created being. There is a threefold reason for this, as proven before in the opposite sense. First, because nothing is as indistinct as being and existence, potency and its act, form and matter. This is how God and every creature are related. Second, nothing is so one and indistinct as a thing that is composed and that from which, through which, and in which it is composed and subsists. But as was said above, number or multitude, the numbered or the numerable as such, is composed and subsists from unities. Therefore, nothing is as indistinct as the one God or Unity and the numbered created thing. The third argument is this. Nothing is as indistinct from anything as from that from which it is indistinguished by its own distinction. But everything that is numbered or created is indistinguished from God by its own distinction as said above. Therefore, nothing is so indistinct

³⁸ Eckhart, *The Commentaries on the Book of Genesis*, Colledge and McGinn, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons*, 106.

³⁹ Eckhart, *The Commentaries on the Book of Genesis*, Colledge and McGinn, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons*, 113.

⁴⁰ Eckhart, *Selections from the Commentary on Wisdom*, in *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, ed. Bernard McGinn, Frank Tobin, and Elvira Borgstadt (Mahwah, N.J.: 1986), 169–70 (sections 154–57).

and consequently one, for the indistinct and the One are the same. Wherefore, God and any creature whatever are indistinct.

156. The second principle point follows, namely, that because it is one "it can do all things."

157. In summary, the argument may be briefly put this way. The more a thing is one, the more powerful it is, as said. Therefore, what is simply one, and it alone, can do all things... But the wisdom that is God is especially one in that it is the First. Therefore, it is simply infinite and is able to do all things.

e) *Commentary on Ecclesiasticus 24:29*
 ("They that eat me shall yet hunger")⁴¹

This text is normally cited as the *locus classicus* in the scriptural commentaries for the treatment of analogy. This very important text is cited at length. However, the other commentaries, especially the *Commentary on St John*, are also important for an understanding of analogy in Eckhart.

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"God, as infinite Truth and Goodness and infinite Existence, is the meat of everything that is, that is true and that is good. And he is hungered for. They feed on him, because they exist, are true, and are good; they hunger because he is infinite." Again, with reference to knowledge of God, Eckhart remarks: "The Damascene in the beginning of his book says: 'God has not left us in total ignorance of him, for knowledge of the being of God is naturally planted in all things'."

There now follows in n. 52 the text that is taken by many as the *locus classicus* for Eckhart's teaching on analogy.

52. Again, note in the right place that these three are to be distinguished: "the univocal, the equivocal and the analogous. Equivocals are divided according to different things that are signified, univocals according to the various differences of the [same] thing." Analogous things are not distinguished according to things, nor through the differences of things, but "according to the modes [of being] of one and the same simple thing. For example, one and the same health that is in an animal is that (and no other) which is in the diet and the urine [of the animal] in such a way that there is no more of health as health in the diet and urine as there is in a stone. Urine is said to be "healthy" only because it signifies health, the same in number, which

⁴¹ *Sermons and Commentary on the Book of Ecclesiasticus*, in *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, ed. McGinn, Tobin, and Borgstadt, 174–93 (sections 52–53).

is in the animal, just as a circular piece of wood which has nothing of wine in it [signifies] wine.⁴²

Being or existence and every perfection, especially general ones such as existence, oneness, truth, goodness, light, justice, and so forth, are used to describe God in an analogical way. It follows from this that goodness and justice and the like [in creatures] have their goodness totally from something outside to which they are analogically ordered, namely, God. That is what Augustine says about existence near the middle of the first book of the *Confessions*, that there is no "vein by which existence comes from a source other" than God who is the Supreme and "the Highest Existence," as was said above in the second explanation. In the third book of the *Confessions*, the same Augustine says of justice that [it is] "everywhere and always [the same], not something else in another place, or otherwise on another occasion; according to it, all who are just are praised by the mouth of God." He often says the same about light, life, and truth, as is clear from his comment on John I, "The true light illumined every man" (Jn. 1:9)

53. The proof can be briefly summarized and formulated thus. Analogates have nothing of the form according to which they are analogically ordered rooted in positive fashion in themselves. But every created being is analogically ordered to God in existence, truth and goodness. Therefore every created being radically and positively possesses existence, life, a wisdom from and in God, *not in themselves as a created being*. And thus, it always "eats" as something produced and created, but it always hungers because it is always from another and not from itself.

Note also that even until today there are some who are in error because they understand the nature of analogy poorly and reject it. According to our understanding of the truth of analogy as declared in the first book of the *Book of Propositions*, we say that the text "They that eat me, shall yet hunger" is perfectly fitted to signify the *truth of the analogy of all things to God himself*. They eat because they are; they hunger because they originate from another.

f) *The Commentary on the Gospel of John: Justice and the Just Man*

Eckhart's basic principle of interpretation: reading Scripture with the help of the natural reasons of the philosophers.

In the opening sections of this commentary, Eckhart sets out his hermeneutics for a philosophical understanding of scriptural texts. Indeed, he makes a philosophical interpretation of the scriptural text normative.

⁴² Note however that the circular piece of wood was a garland of vines. This is very important for the determination of the kind of sign, natural or conventional, which is being indicated.

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2. In interpreting this Word ["In the Beginning was the Word."] and everything else that follows my intention is the same as in all my works—to explain what the holy Christian faith and the two Testaments maintain through the help of the natural arguments of the philosophers.

6. From this follows the seventh point: That the Son or Word is the same as the Father or Principle is. This is what follows, "The Word was God." Here it must be noted that in analogical relations what is produced derives from the source, but is nevertheless itself. Still, insofar as it is in the principle, it is not other in nature or other in supposit. A chest in the maker's mind is not a chest, but is the life and understanding of the maker, his living conception. On this account I would say that what it says here about the procession of the divine Persons holds true and is found in the procession and production of every being of nature and art.⁴³

The sense in which the just person is "the son of God" was a key issue in the Avignon condemnation of Eckhart. This doctrine is closely tied to the doctrine of analogy in Eckhart.

III. FROM AQUINAS TO ECKHART ON ANALOGY

The common interpretation holds that, for Aquinas, the all-important example of the "analogy of health" does not apply to the order of Being. In other words, it is not seen as an intrinsic analogy. Urine and medicine have an external relation to the primary analogate, namely, the healthy animal. For Aquinas, analogy of being involves "an intrinsic participation, that of causal dependence on the first being and by possession of the perfection of being. For Thomas, the *ad unum* relation defines analogy."⁴⁴ There is an intrinsic and formal bond between the primary instance to which it belongs *per essentiam* and the other analogates which receive being from the primary instance *per participationem*. There is an infinite distance between God as fullness of being and those created beings who

⁴³ Eckhart, *Commentary on John*, in Colledge and McGinn, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons*, 122–24.

⁴⁴ Bernard Montagnes, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being According to Thomas Aquinas*, trans. E.M. Macierowski, Pol Vandewelde, and Andrew Tallon, Marquette Studies in Philosophy 25 (Milwaukee: 2004), 44. See Bernard Montagnes, *La doctrine de l'analogie de L'être d'après Thomas D'Aquin* (Louvain/Paris: 1963).

“have being.”⁴⁵ But in Aquinas, there is a real sense in which the secondary analogue “has being,” as in having its own proper being.

A major difficulty arises for modern readers when not paying proper attention to the distinction between: (1) the real order of being, and (2) the order of our knowledge. Our human names are primarily imposed for other created beings. However, *in re* the *causa prima* is the primary analogate. Analogy here does not involve the likeness of a common form (equally or unequally possessed). The latter would have to be a univocal form, and Aquinas rules this out.

The following provides a critical review of some significant treatments of Eckhart on analogy in the period between the late 1970s and 2011. The purpose of the review is not to bring coals to Newcastle but rather to show how new insights have broadened the picture of Eckhart’s account of analogy and have equally shown Eckhart’s close connection to Aquinas even when he differs from the latter on some interpretations.

1. *Reiner Schürmann’s Critique of Analogy in Eckhart*

Schürmann situates Eckhart’s teaching on analogy against the background of Aristotle and Aquinas.⁴⁶ He sees analogy as the means by which medieval thinkers transfer the Aristotelian predicamental analogy to the relation of creature and Creator. It clears a way between a pure equivocity and thus a complete break between creature and Creator, or the reduction of God to form one single substance with the world. Analogy allows one to speak of a communication of being. Schürmann outlines Aquinas’s triple distinction of analogy in the *Sentence Commentary*. First, the health example illustrates a purely conceptual kind of analogy. Health is present only in the animal; it has no common being with urine or food. Yet, we can call them both healthy only with reference to the primary analogate: the healthy animal. The second kind concerns body, which can be univocally used of the “heavens” and the “earth.” It is the same *res* as *body*. Yet, they are two distinct kinds of body. The third kind is an analogy in both intention and being (*secundum intentionem et secundum esse*). Here, being is fully realized only in the primary instance. The inferior beings relate

⁴⁵ Karl Rahner, *Hearers of the Word*, trans. Michael Richards (New York: 1969), 45–52 on the analogy of “having being” in Aquinas. This text exhibits both the richness and difficulties of interpreting Aquinas on the analogy of being.

⁴⁶ Reiner Schürmann, *Meister Eckhart: Mystic and Philosopher* (Bloomington, Ind.: 1978), 172–80. Republished as *Wandering Joy: Meister Eckhart’s Mystical Philosophy* (Great Barrington, Mass.: 2001).

to the first in terms of a diminished perfection. They participate in the first. There is a kind of proportion between good in the primary instance and in the other analogates. However, there is no continuity between the two terms of the analogy. Aquinas discusses the relation of two objects to a third. But in the end he focuses on two terms, one of which is strictly first. "Only in such a type of analogy is there a real communication between the uncreated and the created, as the created is referred directly to its cause. We can call this an analogy of participation of the creature in the Creator."⁴⁷

Schürmann accentuates the differences between Thomas and Eckhart. For Eckhart, *Esse est Deus*. Even when limited to particular beings, the transcendental perfections remain God. "Thus, the concrete, individualized transcendental always expresses the abstract, universal transcendental. Not only is each transcendental convertible with every other, God, but it is God himself even in the finite mode in which a particular being realizes it, in 'this and that'."⁴⁸ Thomas's doctrine of *esse/essentia* enabled him to maintain a greater difference between creatures and Creator in terms of decreasing intensity and increasing limitation. For Eckhart, unlike Aquinas, accidents have no being in themselves, and a construction of proportionality related to predicamental analogy is rejected by him. This has the effect of rejecting an intermediary hierarchy of being. Thus, Eckhart, because of his doctrine of essence and existence, which is different from that of Thomas, does not have room for a theory of participation in terms of decreasing intensity and increasing limitation. Schürmann expresses the position as follows: "In his view (Eckhart) attribution no longer falls within the realistic context of an analogy by proportionality. Attribution does not refer to a mode of being, but to a mode of presence of that single being which is God. 'The mind's being is really the identical being and identical substance and nature' that God is himself. Or again, the goodness of the good man is really goodness itself, which is God."⁴⁹

Created being, then, is a borrowed being. "Being is formally and numerically one. To be 'this or that' adds nothing to being: the individuation of the just man adds nothing to justice."⁵⁰ Schürmann then asks the

⁴⁷ Schürmann, *Meister Eckhart Mystic and Philosopher*, 175.

⁴⁸ Schürmann, *Meister Eckhart Mystic and Philosopher*, 176.

⁴⁹ Schürmann, *Meister Eckhart Mystic and Philosopher*, 178. Significantly, Schürmann interprets Eckhart's reference to the "crown of vine leaves" outside a tavern as a conventional and external sign of the wine inside, and proceeds to name Eckhart's theory as one of "external attribution."

⁵⁰ Schürmann, *Meister Eckhart Mystic and Philosopher*, 179.

big question: "Does such a theocentrism—some say: such a monism of being—abolish all analogical relations between being, which is God, and created beings? . . . or is this not rather a matter of 'genial deception'?"⁵¹

According to Schürmann, three elements still make for a doctrine of analogy: (1) being *qua* being and the transcendental perfections are found formally in only one of the terms considered and created being receives being itself; (2) beyond these transcendental perfections created beings are nothing in themselves, they exist only by "eating" of uncreated *esse*; and (3) such a radical dependence is understandable only in terms of the *ebbulitio* of perfections out of their source. In other words, Eckhart's account of being and analogy cannot be reduced to Aristotelian or to Platonic theory. "The vocabulary of analogy is therefore in itself and necessarily incapable of making one grasp his ontology at its core."⁵²

2. Frank Tobin on Analogy in Eckhart

Frank Tobin has presented one of the best summaries in English of Eckhart's doctrine on analogy.⁵³ He sees analogy as the means by which Eckhart figures out the interrelation of Creator and creatures. It is through this doctrine that the paradoxes of *Esse est Deus* and *Deus est intelligere* are resolved. Eckhart claimed that analogy was commonly misunderstood, and he appealed to this doctrine to defend himself in Cologne. He as much as claims that in condemning him on analogy they were also condemning Thomas Aquinas, who since 1323 had been officially recognized in Avignon as an orthodox teacher. The consensus of the scholarship is that analogy is central for an understanding of Eckhart. Still, scholars differ strongly on "Eckhart's claim of solidarity with Thomas on this point." While analogy is not made a theme in the vernacular works, the treatment in the extant Latin works "is brief, so that we can well wish we were in possession of the lost or never completed section treating it in the *Book of Propositions*."⁵⁴

Tobin proceeds to give an interpretation of the *locus classicus*, the *Second Lecture on Ecclesiasticus*, 24. This is the classical example of health, urine, and food. He remarks:

⁵¹ Schürmann, *Meister Eckhart Mystic and Philosopher*, 179.

⁵² Reiner Schürmann, *Meister Eckhart Mystic and Philosopher*, 179–80.

⁵³ Frank Tobin, *Meister Eckhart: Thought and Language* (Philadelphia: 1986), 34–77.

⁵⁴ Tobin, *Meister Eckhart: Thought and Language*, 44.

This, as one can see, is what we have called analogy of attribution, which limits the real presence of the quality being attributed to only one of the objects being compared. Eckhart is here maintaining that being, goodness, and the like are only really in God and no more in creatures than health is in a stone. In the *First Parisian Question*, where *esse* is denied to God, Eckhart's line of reasoning is really the same [even though he concludes there that one cannot call God being]: "In those things that are said to be related by analogy, what is in one of the things in a real and proper sense [*formaliter*] is not in the other." He then gives the example of health, as above, and concludes: "Since things that are caused [i.e. creatures] are beings in a proper sense, God will not be a being in this sense."⁵⁵

Thus, if creatures have *esse*, "we must use some other term for God such as *intelligere* or *puritas essendi*." If God is called *esse* (*Esse est Deus*), creatures are a nothing. There is no attribute common to God and creatures (*formaliter*). This raises the issue of the proper interpretation of Eckhart's example of health and the role of urine as a sign of health. What kind of signification does urine have to health, and what kind of signification does the circle of vines (wood) have to wine in the tavern? Is it a mere conventional signification or is it a case of natural signification? Tobin sees the addition of the circle of wood example as a support of a conventional/intentional interpretation of urine as sign of health.

Tobin, like most interpreters, contrasts Eckhart's understanding of the creature as having nothing in themselves with the common Scholastic view that each creature has a being which is really its own. Eckhart represents his own view as follows: "The things which are analogous to something (i.e., creatures) have nothing in themselves by which they are in a positive way rooted to the form which is the basis of analogy... Therefore, every created being has positively from God and firmly rooted in God [and] not in its own created self, being, living, knowing." In this vein he interprets John 1:11; Eckhart adds: "He came unto his own" (*in propria venit*): "Through his coming and presence God immediately and with no other agent brings about in all things being, unity, truth, goodness; but, of course, in the manner of analogy."⁵⁶ Tobin comments: "In other words, creatures have no being, unity, truth, or goodness in themselves as creatures. God is their being, unity, truth, and goodness."⁵⁷

Tobin follows this up with a very good treatment of Eckhart's use of significant metaphors: eating and hunger (Avicenna), the sun's illuminating

⁵⁵ Tobin, *Meister Eckhart: Thought and Language*, 44.

⁵⁶ Tobin, *Meister Eckhart: Thought and Language*, 45.

⁵⁷ Tobin, *Meister Eckhart: Thought and Language*, 45.

force, and the image of the mirror. Eckhart remarks: "An image receives its being completely and immediately from that whose image it is, and it has one being with it and the same being"—"it is in that from which it most properly originates."⁵⁸ In the *Book of Divine Consolation*, one has the example of the loan of light. "The sun gives heat to the air, but makes a loan of light; and that is why, as soon as the sun goes down, the air loses the light, but the heat remains there, because the heat is given to the air to possess as its own."⁵⁹

Tobin comments: "What is constantly emphasized in all these images is the fleeting, ephemeral nature of being in creatures. One can well understand why students of mysticism have often stressed a similarity between the medieval Dominican and Eastern mystics."⁶⁰

3. *Alain de Libera: the Problem of Being in Meister Eckhart*

In his very significant study *Le problème de L'être chez Maître Eckhart*, Alain De Libera reads Eckhart's doctrine of being as a metaphysics of analogy.⁶¹ He proposes on the basis of Eckhart's *Tabula* and the prologues to the *Opus tripartitum*, as well as on the basis of his original semantics, that Eckhart provides an interpretation of the doctrine of accidental being in the context of the Thomistic doctrine of "substantial form which alone gives being," and in the light of the metaphysics of being and accident in Dietrich of Freiberg. The 13th-century doctrine of form takes on its specific contours in Eckhart in reference to the doctrine of the transcendentals. He spells this out in four theses:

1. God alone is Being, One, Truth, Good in the proper senses of these words. Being is predicated of creatures in a mode of inherence. Being is not only predicated of God but is identical with God (*Esse est Deus*). The distinction between identity and inherence is simply a formulation of the semantic distinction between predication *secundum adjacens* and predication *tertium adjacens*. Further, following Proclus and Pseudo-Dionysius, Eckhart holds that only God is properly named Unity. All

⁵⁸ Eckhart, *Pr. 16b, Commentary on John*, n. 23, cited in Tobin, *Meister Eckhart: Thought and Language*, 47.

⁵⁹ Eckhart, *Book of Divine Consolation*, trans. Edmund Colledge, 224, cited in Tobin, *Meister Eckhart: Thought and Language*, 47.

⁶⁰ Tobin, *Meister Eckhart: Thought and Language*, 48.

⁶¹ See the reference in note 3 above. See also the earlier work by F. Brunner, "L'Analogie chez Maître Eckhart," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 16 (1969), 333–49.

beings are precontained in that unity. From this, it follows that there is a dialectical accentuation of one pole of the analogy. Thus, the transcendental predicates cannot be properly predicated of creatures. In this manner, Eckhart, by means of his doctrine of analogy, emphasizes the infinite distance between God and the created beings.

2. The second pole of the analogy emphasizes the total dependence of the created beings on the Creator. Thus, creatures have being, truth, and goodness from God alone. It is thus in reference to "*omnia*" and "*esse*" [*Deus*] that creatures are one, true, good, being *in the proper sense of the word* and not in "*an improper and equivocal*" sense. He spells this out in four steps: (a) In a form of Platonic realism, Eckhart states that every quality derives from its archetype, for example, every white object is white due to participating in *whiteness*. Eckhart uses the doctrine of the signification of paronyms to interpret the doctrine of the transcendentals. (b) Following Boethius, Eckhart shows that just as the good thing is based on Goodness, and a being on Being, so too is one thing based on Unity. (c) This has to do with the presence of the transcendentals in things. They are primarily present in things and they are common to all things.⁶² Eckhart upholds the Neoplatonic doctrine of the superior influence of the primary cause over secondary causes. Thus, the primary cause directly influences not only the being of the secondary causes but also each individual being (this or that being) itself. (d) Eckhart presents the doctrine of the "negation of negation" in a wider sense of the word than just a negative attribution of unity. He speaks of a negation of a negation of being. In divine matters, this turns into transcendental affirmation. This leads to the third thesis.
3. Every singular being without intermediary has its being directly from God.
4. There is no "intermediary" between the Creator and created things. God is totally inside and totally outside. God is one in all things; all things are one in God.

⁶² Transcendentals, medieval and modern: one must not confuse the uses of the word "transcendental" in medieval and in modern philosophy. There are continuities in use but there are also significant discontinuities. For a brief account, see Joseph W. Koterski, SJ, *An Introduction to Medieval Philosophy: Basic Concepts* (Oxford: 2009), 111–40. See Ludger Honnefelder, "Metaphysics as a Discipline: From the 'Transcendental Philosophy' of the Ancients to Kant's Transcendental Philosophy," in *The Medieval Heritage in Early Modern Philosophy and Modal Theory, 1400–1700*, ed. Russell Friedman and Lauge Nielsen (Dordrecht: 2003), 53–74.

These latter positions show the extent to which Eckhart has dismantled a traditional Neoplatonic hierarchy of intermediaries. He emphasizes the immediate presence of the primary originating being in the created beings.

The basis of this doctrine in Eckhart is the controversial Thomist doctrine of the unity of substantial form. De Libera sees Eckhart as a defender of this very controversial doctrine of Aquinas which was so violently attacked by leading representatives of the neo-Augustinian Franciscan school. It is this doctrine that enables Eckhart to synthesize the different philosophical positions of Aquinas and Dietrich of Freiberg. Eckhart can transfer this doctrine of the substantial form as immediately informing all matter to the example of the first cause. Thus, being (*esse/Deus*) as the actuality of all forms precontains all things. De Libera raises an interesting question: was it Aquinas as much as Eckhart who was being condemned in Cologne?⁶³ Likewise, given the fact that Eckhart, like Dietrich of Freiberg, had distinct metaphysical positions, how did Eckhart manage to take up, use, and transform Aquinas's doctrine of analogy of being? De Libera explains this in terms of the indebtedness of Aquinas, Dietrich of Freiberg, and Eckhart to medieval logic, and specifically in the case of Dietrich and Eckhart to the tradition of *modist logic*.

Ever since the classic study of Eckhart by Vladimir Lossky, if not indeed prior to it in Koch's important study on analogy, it has been common to refer to Meister Eckhart's doctrine of analogy of being as a doctrine of attribution. In this manner, as we have already seen above, it has been distinguished from the doctrine of proper proportionality in Aquinas. From an analysis of Eckhart's commentaries on Exodus and on Ecclesiasticus, it is clear that he exploited the common Aristotelian-Thomist predicamental analogy of substance and accident for an account of transcendental analogy. Properly speaking, being (*ens*) is said of the substance. Accident is said of the subject (*entis*). For Aquinas, while the categories are univocal, in an analogy, the analogates are distinguished by the modes of one numerically identical thing. The Aristotelian *Categories* with its distinction of univocity and equivocality, and the distinction between synonyms,

⁶³ There is more than an element of truth in de Libera's remarks. For the continuous influence of the condemnation of 1277, see Jan A. Aertsen, Kent Emery, Jr, and Andreas Speer (eds.), *Nach der Verurteilung von 1277, Philosophie und Theologie an der Universität von Paris in letzten Viertel des 13. Jahrhunderts. Studien und Texte/After the Condemnation of 1277. Philosophy and Theology at the University of Paris in the Last Quarter of the Thirteenth Century, Studies and Texts*, Miscellanea Mediaevalia 28 (Berlin: 2001).

homonyms, and paronyms is fundamental. We have seen the example of health above in the introductory section on analogy in Aquinas. One and the same health is predicated of both the primary analogate, the healthy animal and urine (sign of health), and food (conserver of health). As can be seen from the *Commentary on Ecclesiasticus*, Eckhart seems to disagree with Aquinas's works, on the surface at least, when he states that there is no more health in the urine and the food than in a stone. Moreover, Eckhart modifies Aquinas's account by speaking of urine and the circle of vine (wood) outside a tavern that is a sign of the wine inside. This was no accidental alteration of Aquinas's language by Meister Eckhart.

De Libera breaks Aquinas's position into four points: (a) The one true being is substance. Accidents are "of the substance," they are not *directly beings but are rather beings in an indirect way*. (b) The dissimilarity of substance and accident can be expressed by means of an analogy *ad unum alterum*. (c) The analogates have nothing in themselves according to which they are related to something else. (d) Finally, the substantial form alone gives being to the composite. Thus, the accidents add nothing to being, unity, and good. They are simply distinguishing marks of one identical substance. These "externals," however, are not pure nothing; they are *beings in an indirect way*. The originality of Eckhart's approach is to interpret the substance/accident relation in the context of analogy of attribution. Hence, it became the common view that Eckhart denied proper proportionality and was committed only to the more deficient analogy of external attribution. De Libera's response is telling: "*Les choses sont cependant loin d'être ainsi simples.*" He recognizes that Eckhart did not hold to a doctrine of analogy as interpreted by Thomas de Vio (Cajetan) based on Aquinas's *Commentary on the Sentences*, and notes correctly that Eckhart is more dependent on Aquinas's *Summa contra gentiles*. Here the emphasis is on analogy *ad unum*. What is said analogically is said according to an intrinsic directionality (*ordo*) to some one thing. One can distinguish here two kinds of analogy: (a) that of many to "some other one thing" (*ad aliquid alterum unum*), and (b) the case of two things where one is the primary analogate (*ad unum ipsorum*). We have seen an example of the first kind above: the healthy animal and the urine and food as the sign and cause of health.

The second kind can be spelled out by the substance/accident distinction as in healthy animal and urine or food. This substance/accident model is the one Eckhart applies to the analogical relation of created things to God. In the context of modist logic one has a correspondence of the *ordo* of name, knowledge, and thing. Substance and accident can be distinguished as between *per prius* and *ex posterius*.

Crucially important here is the distinction between the order of reality and the order of knowledge. In terms of reality, the primary analogate is God; in terms of knowledge it is the created being, since names are imposed for creatures and it is by knowledge of creatures that one reaches knowledge of God. We use the name "healthy animal," but in reality the animal is healthy "by the power of the conservation of health" (*vis sanandi*). We speak analogically with reference to "one of the analogates," but we speak in knowledge about the second analogate. As Aquinas puts it in *Summa contra gentiles*, one can distinguish the following:

- ad unum alterum* (healthy animal, urine, food)
- ad unum ipsorum* (substance and accident)
- ad unum ipsorum* (justice and the just in terms of God/created beings).⁶⁴

Eckhart's originality consists in reducing all three to an *ordo ad unum aliquid*. In this way, he goes beyond the distinction of proper proportionality and attribution. De Libera speaks of Eckhart's dialecticization of Aquinas's *ad aliquid unum*. This kind of analogy is complete, and further, Eckhart replaces Aquinas's conservation of health (medicine/food) with urine (a sign) and the circle of wood (vines) (a sign) outside the wine tavern as his basic model. Here, we can speak of Eckhart's semiotic analogy.⁶⁵ Further, Eckhart develops the account of accident by taking over Dietrich of Freiberg's doctrine of the nonentity of accident.⁶⁶

The issue here comes down to whether or not urine and the circle of vines (wood) are conventional or natural signs. It is easy to see how urine is a natural sign, but what of the circle of wood/vines? It seems to be a conventional sign. Yet in the history of 13th-century Modist and pre-Modist logic, this example is often used. It is not original with Eckhart.⁶⁷ A consideration of this matter leads de Libera to a discussion of the doctrine of the imposition of names and a discussion of the role of the copula in

⁶⁴ De Libera, *Le Probleme De L'être Chez Maître Eckhart: Logique et Metaphysique de L'Analogie*, 8.

⁶⁵ As de Libera recognizes, the example of the circle of vines is not original with Eckhart. It can be found in the logic and semiotics of Roger Bacon and his contemporaries in the 13th century.

⁶⁶ De Libera, *Le Probleme De L'être Chez Maître Eckhart: Logique et Metaphysique de L'Analogie*, 53–58. De Libera presents a very good outline of the understanding of essence/existence in Eckhart and Dietrich of Freiberg, especially in terms of their difference from Aquinas.

⁶⁷ De Libera, *Le Probleme De L'être Chez Maître Eckhart: Logique et Metaphysique de L'Analogie*, 13–48.

the proposition. He rightly states that Eckhart's semantics is close to that of Aquinas, although it is also influenced by Dietrich of Freiberg. Eckhart places his semantics in the service of his distinctive metaphysical vision.

The most important issue here for the doctrine of analogy is the distinction between predication *secundum adjacens* and *tercium adjacens*. The former allows Eckhart to make strong identity and existential claims, as in "God is." The latter enables Eckhart to deal with the truth of the statement "man is an animal even if no animals exist."

In terms of a doctrine of names, Eckhart, unlike Aquinas, will turn to a logic of paradox when speaking about the created being "having being" (analogically). Created being as created being does not have being in itself; it is not the absolute.

For the purposes of this chapter, the more fundamental point is that, in Eckhart, the doctrine of the unity of being takes central place. This is shown in the distinction between original unity of being and the unity of "this and that thing" (*ens hoc et hoc*). With his doctrine of original unity, together with that of the negation of negation, Eckhart is able to move beyond analogy and univocity to a doctrine of dialectic. This Neoplatonic doctrine of unity enables Eckhart to combine the account of proper proportionality and attribution. Eckhart's doctrine of these latter kinds of analogy is different from Aquinas. One can indeed say that he has assimilated Aquinas's position and transcended it while including it. This is good philosophical procedure.

Eckhart does not maintain a static oppositional relation to Aquinas. Rather, drawing on Dietrich of Freiberg, he develops his own distinctive understanding of philosophy and theology, and his own distinctive metaphysical approach to being.

4. *Analogy or Univocity? Burkhard Mojsisch: The Priority of Univocity*

Burkhard Mojsisch's study of analogy, univocity, and unity in Eckhart⁶⁸ is deeply philosophical in scope and sets the Eckhart commentaries and sermons in the context of the foundational philosophical and theological positions in the *Parisian Questions* and the prologues to the *Opus Tripar-*

⁶⁸ Burkhard Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart: Analogy, Univocity and Unity*, trans. Orrin F. Summerell (Amsterdam: 2001). See also the original German version, Burkhard Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart: Analogie, Univozität und Einheit* (Hamburg: 1983).

titum. This has the advantage of reading Eckhart in the light of his cited philosophical sources, and especially Proclus [*Liber de causis*], Augustine, Albertus, Thomas, and Dietrich of Freiberg. For a critical discussion of Mojsisch's study, the summary remarks of Jörg Seelhorst cover the terms of the contemporary debate.⁶⁹

Mojsisch rightly accentuates the primacy of natural philosophy as a foundation for analogy in Eckhart. If one simply sees Eckhart's hermeneutic as a discussion of reason and faith in the abstract, one will miss the crucial role of natural philosophy as the foundation of definitional knowledge of natural things. Such knowledge is univocal. He correctly acknowledges the interrelation of heavens and earth and the related interaction of form and matter. Above all, he notices that Eckhart's concordance of philosophy and theology is very different from the agreement of faith and reason as expressed in Albert, Thomas, Dietrich, and others.⁷⁰ And it is very different indeed from modern reinterpretations of Thomas, many of which are quite ahistorical. Lack of context and historical content allows one to attribute to Aquinas modern positions that he could not possibly have held.

Eckhart's is a philosophical theology, and it is not a surprise to see him state that the object of the Gospel is "Being as Being" [*Ens qua ens*]. His position of concordance is more explicitly philosophical than that of Albert and Dietrich. For Eckhart, philosophical thinking is no mere external band-aid or external methodology; it is an essential part of the human being's search for the truth of things. Mojsisch points to one central issue. Neoplatonism had distinguished carefully between the heavens and the earth. Below the moon, Aristotle was the expert; above the moon, Plato was the expert. And so, it is not surprising to see Eckhart privilege both Platonism and Maimonides on issues having to do with the heavens and with God. Implicit here is the position that while Aristotle is the master of natural philosophy, he does not have the last word on God. Belief (*fides*) is the pathway to knowledge (*scire*), *especially to knowledge of the divine*. Mojsisch discusses the issue of mysticism in Eckhart and sharply distinguishes Eckhart's philosophical approach to God from any

⁶⁹ Cited in Jörg Seelhorst, *Autoreferentialität und Transformation: Zur Funktion mystischen Sprechens bei Mechtild von Magdeburg, Meister Eckhart, und Heinrich Seuse* (Tübingen: 2003); see Markus Enders, "Eckhart's Understanding of God" in the present volume.

⁷⁰ Burkhard Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart: Analogy, Univocity and Unity*, 6–20.

emotive subjective mysticism.⁷¹ In Eckhart, “thinking” takes precedence over “experience.” Eckhart’s new metaphysics is universalistic in that the one truth of God is the same truth spoken in different ways by Moses, Christ, and the philosophers. This teaching is closely linked to Mojsisch’s understanding of the foundations of Eckhart’s ethics.

In presenting Eckhart’s teaching from the first *Parisian Question* and from the *General Prologue* to the *Opus tripartitum*, Mojsisch places much emphasis on the primacy of understanding in God over being. Following the *Liber de causis*, “being” is the name of the first created things.⁷² To understand is the foundation of God’s being. And even the word being cannot be said of God, especially since it is formally predicated of creatures. Eckhart makes a fundamental distinction between God as *esse absolutum* and created beings as “this being and that being” (*esse hoc et hoc*). God is the univocal first cause, the essential cause (*principium*). As such a cause, God cannot be a particular determinate being. God is pure intellectuality. Thus, over against God as univocal cause (reason), beings are separate from God, and are analogous in respect of God. In the first univocal cause, however, they are present ideally or in reason. From this viewpoint of “principal” knowledge, there is an “Analogous Cause” only in relation to created things. Created beings are present univocally in the primary cause.

The main difficulty here is one of perspective. From a purely human point of view, it seems that we possess being ourselves as our own owned being, when in fact being is a gift, a loan from the first cause. Seen from the “*principium*,” all principiate beings are in, through, and with the first cause.

Hence, the standard example from Aristotle and Thomas of health is given a peculiar interpretation by Eckhart. Health is only formally present in the animal; it is no more in the urine or in the food than as in a stone. Again, in terms of the relations of substance and accident, the accident has no being in itself. It has reality only in reference to the substance. Hence, one cannot as in Aquinas speak of the proper being of the created thing based on a shared perfection, nor does accidental being have the same status as *entis* in Aquinas.

⁷¹ Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart: Analogy, Univocity and Unity*, 12–13; see also Kurt Flasch, “Die Intention Meister Eckharts,” in *Sprache und Begriff. Festschrift für B. Liebrucks* (Meisenheim am Glan: 1974), 292–318.

⁷² *Liber de causis*, ed. A. Pattin, *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 28 (1966), 134–203.

Intellectuality or reason, therefore, is in a basic way the ground of the divine being. All beings preexist in the divine reason. If one wishes to name divine reason "being," that is fine provided one recognizes intellectuality as the ground of that being. Here, it would appear that the being itself of God is reduced to God's reason (Logos).

The function of analogy in Eckhart, then, is to emphasize the nullity of creatures over against God. This requires the logic of polar opposition. Thus, in Eckhart there is a move that begins with Aquinas but which moves beyond Aquinas. In the words of J. Kopper, cited by Mojsisch, "The structure of the being of beings is not measured relative to the unity of divine Being, it is transformed wholly into the unity of the divine Being."⁷³ Moreover, all of the transcendental and the general perfections are analogously valid of God and creatures.

Mojsisch on Eckhart's Sermon—Commentary on Ecclesiasticus

Mojsisch summarizes the teaching as follows: each analogate is formally present in the principal analogate alone. The principal analogate has modes. From the view of the principal analogate, these modes are the principal analogate itself and they are in the secondary analogate only in so far as (*in quantum*) they are a sign of the primary analogate. However, their being a sign has intrinsic reference: they are not mere externals. Yet, the secondary analogate does not possess the signification as its own. The latter mediates the primary analogue which is mediating itself with itself. Determinate being (created being) in and of itself is no-thing. It *exists* only insofar as it is in and from the primary analogatge. Thus, the secondary analogate is a gift, a loan, something borrowed from the primary analogate.

In Eckhart's view, "*esse est Deus*." Being is identified with the primary analogate, God. If this were not so, one would have to look for another cause of God and creatures. If being were not imparted to beings, they would be a nothing. Insofar as the creature has goodness, justice, truth, it has it from God. What is a possession is in fact a receiving. And this constant reception of being results in a constant striving for being. "Things consume being, since they are, yet they hunger for being, since they are from another."

Eckhart's doctrine of analogy, then, is his way of showing that the creature is not autonomous, that is, in total self-possession of being. It has

⁷³ Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart: Analogy, Univocity and Unity*, 60.

possession as an imparted possession, on loan as it were. The created is even in its own being a pointing away from itself to Being in itself, to the Absolute Being. The created as such is a kind of deficiency pointing away from itself. This means that there is no third separate perfection shared by the two analogates.

The centerpiece of Mojsisch's study is the recognition that scholars had ignored the role played by the doctrine of univocity in Eckhart.⁷⁴ With the exception of Joseph Koch and Bernhard Welte, the importance of univocity in Eckhart in regard to the doctrine of hierarchy and principles had been ignored. Discussing the importance of univocity in Eckhart's many examples from philosophy of nature, Mojsisch points to the account of justice and the just person in Eckhart's *Commentary on John* as having importance for the understanding of univocity. He remarks: "Consequently, Eckhart's doctrine of the principles cannot be understood without the notion of univocity... This makes it possible to understand the notion of self-mediation of the absolute emergent in the consideration of the doctrine of analogy and yet unexplainable by the notion of analogy itself."⁷⁵ Mojsisch provides a summary of Eckhart's doctrine of univocity in nature, and states: "The result of this analysis: Over against the external relationality of analogue relata, univocal correlationality involves an immanent relationality. Eckhart emphasizes the mutual relatedness of the moments univocal-casually interpenetrating one another... The agent imparts to the passive everything which it is able to impart, and the passive receives what has been imparted as its inheritance, not as something merely lent."⁷⁶

Mojsisch sees a good example of this in the second *Commentary on Genesis* and especially in the great *Commentary on St John* in regard to justice and the just. The prologue to this latter gospel is the starting point for Eckhart's treatment of the interrelation of univocity and analogy: "*In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.*" Mojsisch comments: "Insofar as something proceeds from another, it distinguishes itself from the other."⁷⁷

This discussion points to a certain equality between what brings forth and what proceeds. Eckhart explicitly refers to the fact that *in analogicis* what is brought forth is always inferior to, less than, or more imperfect

⁷⁴ Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart: Analogy, Univocity and Unity*, 68.

⁷⁵ Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart: Analogy, Univocity and Unity*, 69.

⁷⁶ Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart: Analogy, Univocity and Unity*, 71–72.

⁷⁷ Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart: Analogy, Univocity and Unity*, 73; see 72–81.

than what brings forth and is not equal to it; while *in univocis*, what is brought forth is always equal to what brings forth. It not only takes part in the same nature (participation takes place *in analogicis*), but moreover it receives this nature from its origin simply and wholly, without reduction and in the same perfection. [“6. What proceeds is the Son of whatever brings forth, For a Son is another in person, not another in nature. 7. The Son or the Word is the same as the Father or the Origin.”]⁷⁸

“Once again, Eckhart refers in this context to the difference between analogicity and univocity. In an analogue relation, what has been brought forth comes from what brings forth, but it is subordinate to its origin and so not on equal footing with it. Moreover, it is another according to nature, and so it is not the origin itself. Only insofar as it is in the origin is it the origin itself (for there it is in the manner of univocity).”⁷⁹

Mojsisch summarizes as follows:

1. The just as such (the Son of God) or the ground of the soul in its identity with the Son of God—this is yet to be shown—is in justice itself (God the Father). The just itself as such would not be just if he were outside of Justice.
2. The just is in justice beforehand in the way the concrete is in the abstract, in the way that the participant is in that in which it takes part. This easily misunderstood principle does not intend to express the analogue relation between justice and the just: the analogue relation of participation. Instead, it means to clarify how the just is in justice beforehand even before one can speak of analogy at all. Eckhart wishes to accentuate a perspective of univocal correlativity: the unity of univocal relata. 3. The just is the Word of justice through which justice expresses and announces itself. . . . 4. Justice has in itself an archetype, a similarity or determination, in which and according to which it forms, shapes with form or clothes everything just.⁸⁰

Justice and the just are atemporal. The univocal relation is atemporal while the analogue relation is temporal. In short, justice and the just are pretemporal and transtemporal. Mojsisch sees the *Commentary on St John* as a great example of the theory of univocity in Eckhart. “It serves notice how univocation takes place in the intellectual realm and how the theory of analogy is only to be understood in connection with the underlying theory of univocity.”⁸¹

Mojsisch gives further treatment and then moves to a discussion of the doctrine of Unity and negation of negation. Here, the text above from the

⁷⁸ Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart: Analogy, Univocity and Unity*, 73.

⁷⁹ Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart: Analogy, Univocity and Unity*, 73.

⁸⁰ Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart: Analogy, Univocity and Unity*, 76–77.

⁸¹ Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart: Analogy, Univocity and Unity*, 76.

biblical *Book of Wisdom* is significant. Since Bernard McGinn has given a good treatment of the distinction/indistinction theme and of the doctrine of unity, there is no need to repeat it here. One can simply say that the doctrine of the Unity of Being has a most important place in Eckhart.

5. Bernard McGinn on Analogy in Eckhart

McGinn examines two issues: first, “how human language in general is used of God and second, what light this sheds on the application of the transcendental terms to divine nature as such, not just to the Trinity of Persons.”⁸² He notes that in one sense Eckhart’s work as a whole is an exploration of this theme. He proceeds to note Eckhart’s concern with predication, analogy, and dialectic. McGinn points to the primary usage of “two-term propositions” (*secundum adiacens*) over “three-term propositions” (*tertium adiacens*) in Eckhart. The latter are more properly suited to the details of particular beings. The two-term proposition allows one to stress the existential meaning of the verb to be. Addressing the *locus classicus* on analogy in the *Sermons and Lectures on Ecclesiasticus*, McGinn remarks: “Therefore, analogy does not indicate some kind of sharing of God and creature in a predicate (e.g., *esse*), but rather denotes the fact that God alone really possesses the attribute. As Dietmar Mieth puts it: ‘Analogy is not, as with Thomas, a connective relationship, but a relationship of dependence; analogy does not explain what something is, but where it comes from.’ The reality of creatures in Eckhart’s doctrine of analogy is the reality of pointing to God.”⁸³

McGinn adds: “There is another characteristic of Eckhart’s use of analogy that points beyond analogy itself in the direction of the third and most important level of language about God—Dialectic. As a number of investigators have noticed, Eckhart’s use of analogy is reversible. If something is affirmed about God, it must be denied of creatures, at least in any real sense. On the other hand, anything that is affirmed of creatures must be denied of God. This is the root of the kind of extreme formulations about God and creatures that so upset the Dominican’s inquisitors . . . Eckhart’s doctrine of analogy, then, is one of formal opposition, not the normal scholastic understanding of attribution (i.e., one being possesses a quality which can be rightly attributed to another), or proportionality (i.e., the way in which one being has a quality has

⁸² Bernard McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart: The Man from Whom God Hid Nothing* (New York: 2001), 90.

⁸³ Bernard McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart*, 92.

some proportion to the way in which another has it). The peculiarity of Eckhart's self-reversing analogy leads directly to the many passages in his teaching and preaching where the German Dominican employs the language of dialectical Neoplatonism, first created by pagan mystical theorists such as Plotinus and Proclus, and transformed for Christian use by Dionysius among the Greek Fathers and John Scottus Eriugena in the Latin West. By dialectical language I mean: (a) predicating determinations (e.g., God is distinct), (b) simultaneously predicating opposed determinations (e.g., God is distinct and indistinct); and (c) predicating a necessary mutual relationship between the opposed determinations (e.g., God is the more distinct the more indistinct he is). Dialectical language of this sort was the special linguistic strategy that allowed Eckhart to bring out the higher unity, or deeper 'non-insight' (*unwizzen*), of the mutually opposed forms of analogical predications. The Dominican was well acquainted with Dionysius and also with some texts of Proclus. The extent of his direct knowledge of Eriugena is unclear. His form of dialectical Christian Neoplatonism, however, is not really reducible to his sources—it is a new rendition of an old theme designed to fit a changed situation.”⁸⁴

McGinn is motivated towards using the expression *dialectic* due to the fact that the traditional scholastic uses of analogy is broken at its limits by Eckhart and because the ultimate source of Eckhart's thinking here is Plato and Proclus. Yet, the ultimate biblical sources for this motif in Eckhart are the passages from the book of Wisdom that stress the essential unity of God. As McGinn illustrates, Eckhart raises this discussion to the level of a critical philosophical discussion of the relation of the One and Many, so typical of the Neoplatonic tradition.⁸⁵ God as the absolute one/unity is not a number but is rather the source of all numbers. In his extended account of this topic, McGinn points to Eckhart's critical blending of both Maimonides and Aquinas so as to achieve a deepening of the doctrine of the divine unity. In the end, “God is uncreated ‘Isness’ and unnamed Nothingness.” When such concepts were presented to both lay and learned audiences in a kind of dialectical shock therapy, it is evident that it would help some but would disturb others.

⁸⁴ Bernard McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart*, 92–93.

⁸⁵ Bernard McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart*, 94; see also Bernard McGinn, “Meister Eckhart on God as Absolute Unity,” in *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, ed. Dominic J. O'Meara (Albany, N.Y.: 1982), 128–39. See especially 138–39 on E. Coreth's objections to the use of the term “dialectic.”

One might raise a question here: why so much emphasis on the unity of God? Could it be that the medieval dialogue with the thinkers from the world of Islam and Judaism forced Christian Trinitarian theologians to really think harder about how one might express the essential truth about the unity of God? Certainly, in Eckhart among others, one notices this powerful emphasis on the unity of God.

CONCLUSION

What significant changes in interpretation have been achieved in the new research between the late 1970s and 2010? First, we can say that Eckhart's metaphysics of unity provides an element of intrinsic attribution, and so his doctrine of analogy should not be blithely dismissed as a case of mere "external attribution." Above all, we can see the manner in which Eckhart combined insights from Aquinas, Dietrich of Freiberg, Proclus, and Maimonides to formulate his own distinctive account of analogy. Reiner Schürmann was one of the first critics who illustrated the way in which Eckhart's doctrine of analogy broke the bounds of traditional scholastic accounts of traditional doctrines of analogy of being. Alain de Libera placed Eckhart in his actual context as a critical reader of Aquinas and Dietrich of Freiberg. He also drew scholarly attention to the essential role of Modist logic in Eckhart's semantics. The research of Burkhard Mojsisch has forced scholars to look critically at the role of univocity in Eckhart's accounts of analogy. He also shows that Eckhart provides a reduction to unity. What remains to be explored more is the relation of things said *analogice* to the unitary meaning of the primary analogate. Again, Mojsisch forces the reader to come to grips with the impact of Proclus on Eckhart's forms of interpretation. Third, Tobin and McGinn situate Eckhart in his times. The transition in the doctrine of analogy from Aquinas to Eckhart is noted. Above all, McGinn presents a central reference point when he argues for the adoption of a Neoplatonic dialectic as a way to understand Eckhart's transcending of the polarity of analogy and univocity. The scholarship has made greater progress by means of the critical reading of Eckhart on the basis of his actual philosophical and theological sources. This is hard contextual work and it will go on for a long time. It should lead in time to stronger and better readings of Eckhart.

ECKHART'S ANTHROPOLOGY

Udo Kern

In Eckhart's definition, "*Homo* means a human person to whom substance is given, and the substance gives him Being and life and a rational Being. A rational human person is one who understands himself with his reason and is in himself *abgeschaiden* from all matter and form. The more *abgeschaiden* he is from all things and turned in upon himself, the more does he clearly and rationally know all things without turning outwards; the more so is he a human person" (DW I, 250, 4–10).

The human person's happiness "consists . . . in the knowledge of God" (LW I, 433, 1), that is, in the "knowledge that is Being" (LW IV, 370, 1f.).

These propositions contain essential elements of Eckhart's understanding of the human person.

1. THE RATIONAL PERSON AS THE HUMAN PERSON IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

The transcendent God, who is not a creature, "is *intellectus* and *intelligere*" (LW V, 41, 13f.). With Augustine, Eckhart says that all creatures resemble God and possess the *similitudo dei*; but the image of God (*imago dei*) is only in the creature endowed with reason (LW IV, 422, 10f.). The human person is *imago dei* (Gen 1:26f.). The *imago dei* must not "lack anything that is in God, nor anything in him that is in some creature or other" (LW IV, 425, 11–426, 1). Eckhart argues, with John Damascene, that *imago* is the *intellectualitas* (i.e. the intellectual nature of the human person that has power over itself with free will, and which constitutes the *principium* and *potestas* of its working). Unlike Christ, the human person is not the *imago dei*, but is created *ad imaginem Dei* (LW I, 276, 5–8). Every being endowed with understanding is created according to the image of God (LW III, 24, 17–25, 1). Only the Son is the *imago dei patris*, while the human soul is *ad imaginem* (LW II, 615, 11f.). As the only begotten Son, as the *filius naturalis*, Christ is himself the *imago dei patris*. We human beings are *imago totius trinitatis*, says Eckhart in a Trinitarian interpretation of Gen. 1:26. But although we have many fathers—unlike the only begotten Son who has only one Father—we can become conformed to the nature of the only begotten Son through rebirth (LW III, 107, 9–15).

With Maimonides, Eckhart affirms that the *intellectus* is the highest perfection which God bestowed on the human person, as a being created *ad imaginem dei* (LW I, 349, 6–8). Appealing to Aristotle (*Met.* I, 1 980 b 27), Eckhart defines the human person as an *ens rationale* (LW III, 10, 10f., 2). The human person is a *species*, which in accordance with its nature, is oriented to *cognoscere* and *intelligere*, and arrives *qua intellectus* at its authenticity and perfection (LW I, 332, 5–7). “The human person is what he is through *ratio* and *intellectus*” (LW III, 265, 12). It is the *intellectus* that makes the human person a human person (LW I, 358, 10f.). Like Aristotle (*Met.* 1, 9 980 a 21), Eckhart says that all human persons, in accordance with their nature, are rational beings oriented towards knowledge (DW V, 116, 10f.). There is a strict relationship of implication between the act of rational knowing and being a human person: this is why “all human persons naturally” yearn for “knowledge,” and even “the knowledge of evil things is good” (DW V, 116, 10–12).

Created *ad imaginem dei*, the human person is thus an *ens rationale*. He is indeed also a sensuous being (*ens sensitivum*), but he is more: he is a rational being (*ens intellectivum*) created *ad imaginem dei*. Just as human beings cannot build anything without physical tools (*instrumenta corporalia*), so too *intelligere* is impossible for them without conceptual images (*intelligere sine phantasmate*). The conceptual image is a movement that goes forth from the senses. Without the senses, it would be impossible for the human person to realize his *intelligere* and thereby become a complete human person. Nevertheless, there is an essential hierarchy between the *sensitivum* and the *intellectivum*: the former is subordinate to the latter (LW I, 604, 3–605, 2).

To rationality belongs the very highest knowledge, which is not subject to limitation: “Rationality looks in and pierces all the corners of the Godhead and takes the Son in the Father’s heart and in the ground, and puts him in its own ground. Rationality penetrates in; it is not satisfied with goodness or wisdom or truth or God himself. . . . It breaks into the ground” (DW III, 178, 3–179, 5). The object of reason “is the *ens absolute*, not only the *hoc aut illud*” (i.e. this and that existent) (LW I, 272, 5f.). The *intellectus* “abstracts from here and where, from now and from time” (LW I, 358, 11).

Taking up the Aristotelian differentiation between the active (*intellectus agens*) and the possible reason (*intellectus possibilis*),¹ Eckhart draws

¹ See Aristotle, *De anima* 3, 5, 430 a 14f.

a distinction between the natural and the graced knowledge on the part of the reason: (1) the reason is a power of the soul (*intellectus agens* and *intellectus possibilis*), a natural knowing in the triad of the soul—*memoria*, *intellectus*, and *voluntas*. (2) The reason is the highest power of the soul, the *intellectus possibilis* which coincides with the ground of the soul and the *essentia animae*, and is thereby in the light and the place of grace (DW III, 262, 1). Grace is present in the reason as *vüinkelîn der redelicheit* (DW III, 315, 6). This reason is *pure possibility*, and as such it is the *locus locutionis dei*. God utters himself by grace into the reason as pure possibility, and gives birth to his Son in the reason. This makes the rational human being a son.

It is necessary for the human being to give his reason the right goal and training, in order to become divine in his interior. It is necessary “that the human person lets his reason become rightly and wholly accustomed to God and that he exercises it: in this way, his interior will always be divine” (DW V, 277, 4f.). The right use of the reason leads to divinization (*theosis*). To be on the height of the reason means being in the omnipresence of God. “The one to whom God is thus present in all things and who uses his reason in the Most High . . . is familiar with . . . true peace and possesses a right kingdom of heaven” (DW V, 211, 3–5). On the other hand, if the reason takes the opposite direction and absolutizes the creatures, it deforms itself, becomes weak, and is destroyed (DW V, 277, 12–278, 2).

Intelligere is *intus legere*. The intellect reads reality as something it has taken up internally. It reads reality in its essential, basic principles (LW I, 544, 10–12; 542, 9f.). As pure nothing, the *intellectus* takes the path to the pure ontic substance of things (LW V, 60, 6f.). It is the “similitude of all that exists and contains in itself the existent in its totality” (LW I, 272, 3–5). The human being is a rational creature who participates ontologically in the perfections of the *intellectus*. The human being is not *totum intelligere*, since this is “uncreated and uncreaturally” (DW I, 220, 5). Unlike God, whatever is created is not pure Being and pure knowing (LW IV, 267, 9f.).

2. THE SON WHO IS ONE IN THE ONE ONE

The root of all thinking is *unitas* or *simplicitas* (LW II, 326, 8f.). *Intellectus* belongs to the one One. Eckhart identifies *intellectus* and *unus deus*: “*Deus . . . unus est intellectus, et intellectus est unus deus.*” Accordingly, “How much each one has of God, and thus how much each one has of being one with God, depends on how much *intellectus* . . . each one has” (LW IV, 269, 15–270, 1).

Since *unitas* or the *unum* is proper to the *intellectus* (LW IV, 266, 11f.), it is absolutely necessary for the human being, as a rational creature, to be marked by the One. As *creatura intellectualis*, the human being can be oriented only to the One of the rational existent. This is how he acquires essential *intellectualitas*. He does justice to his intellectual being not in a plural lack of concentration, but in the orientation and definition by the One. This is why being one in the One is the decisive mark of human existence. Outside the essential fundamental orientation to the One, the human existence of the human being loses its way and gets stuck in substitute achievements in the realm of pluralities, thereby alienating himself from what he *is*, namely an *ens rationale*.

The root of all *intelligere*, being one, is not per se proper to the *entia materialia*, the material beings, since these are composed of form and matter. The same is true of the *entia immaterialia sive intellectualia*, since here Being and thinking are not identical, but are composite. *Unitas intellectualis* is found only in the *deus unus*. The *deus unus* is *intellectus se toto* (LW IV, 267, 4f.). Nothing that is creaturely is the pure One, since it is not *purum esse* and *totus intellectus* (LW IV, 266, 12–267, 10). Only the one God corresponds to the *unitas intellectus*, and is thus *intelligere* (LW IV, 270, 1f.). Eckhart's incriminated proposition *intelligere est increabile* (LW IV, 268, 9) thus shows precisely the total dependence of *intelligere* on God. The *increabilitas intellectus* in its proprietary *unitas* has its source exclusively in the one God. The open breadth and the unlimited openness of *intelligere* are owed exclusively to the one God.

The human person is created as the image of God. The rest of creation is created as the *similitudo* ("similarity") and thereby as the many, but the human person is created for the One, namely God (Deut. 6:4 and Gal. 3:20). Non-human creation "goes forth into Being on the basis of the *similitudo*, and this is why it strives back to God, and it suffices for it to be like (*similis*) God. But the return to what is similar does not suffice for the human person, since he is created as the image of the entire one substance of God and on the basis of the one totality in Being. Rather, he returns to the One from which he has gone forth" (LW III, 479, 3–480, 1). But how is it possible for the human person to return to the One and thereby to his own authenticity and essentiality? "Having modes" of voluntative and intellectual human exertions are out of place here. They construct destructive phantoms of terrible faults. Capitalistic willing and knowing do not provide any help. If the human person is to be a human person in accordance with the *prima intentio dei*, he must become the Son of God.

Eckhart's core idea about the birth of God in the soul is fundamental for his definition of right human existence, which correlates with the One:

I can be a human person only in *his* specific quality as Son. In other words, without the birth of the Son there is no rational human existence! Through the birth of God in the soul, I become the Son: "The Father gives birth to his Son, equal to himself, in eternity. 'The Word was with God, and God was the Word' (Jn 1:1). It was the same in the same nature." More than this, God has "given birth" to the Son "in my soul. Not only is my soul with him and he with it as equals, but he is in it; and the Father gives birth to his Son in the same way as he gives birth to him in eternity . . . The Father gives birth to his Son without ceasing, and I say more: He gives birth to me as his Son, and as the same Son." Not only this: "he gives birth to me (as) himself and to himself (as) me and to me as his Being and as his nature. In the innermost spring, where I well forth from the Holy Spirit, there is *one* life and *one* Being and *one* work. All that God does is one; this is why he gives birth to me as his Son without any difference" (DW I, 109, 2–110, 2). God the Father gives birth to me as his Son in the soul not *analogice*, like the creatures in images and similitudes, but *univoce*, "entirely in the way in which he gives birth in eternity . . . Now then, how does he give birth to him there? . . . Behold, God the Father has a perfect unity in himself and a profound complete knowledge of himself through himself . . ." Without images, he gives birth "to his Son in the true unity . . . of the divine nature. Behold, in the *same* way . . . God the Father gives birth to his Son in the ground of the soul and in its Being, and thus unites himself to it" (DW IV/1, 350, 85–352, 93). The soul becomes the place where God works by giving birth, because God himself, through the birth of the Son in the soul, creates in it perfection, light, grace, and blessedness (DW IV, 410, 15–17). The birth of God in the soul must be understood univocally. For it is "*one* birth, and this birth takes place in the *Being* and in the *ground* of the soul." It "takes place in the soul entirely in the same way" as "in eternity . . . ; for it is *one* birth" of the one God (DW IV/1, 407, 3–6). In the ground of the soul, "the ground of God and the ground of the soul are one ground" (DW I, 253, 5f.). Through the birth of God in the soul, the human person who is affected by this becomes one who dwells in the one ground of God and is thus a human person by being the Son. As one who stands in the ground, he is the one whose Being is one with the One in the ground.

3. I, STANDING IN THE FIRST CAUSE

I share with others the fact that I am a human person with senses and reason. "*That I am*—that belongs to no other person than to me alone, to no human being, nor to God, except to the extent that I am one with

him; it is . . . a unity" (DW II, 63, 5–7). I am I. "I designates . . . the substance which is not to be found in this world" (LW III, 432, 8f.). "I" belongs to "no one other than God alone in his unity" (DW II, 68, 4f.). Analytically, "I" is related to unity of being (DW III, 339, 5), to *purum esse* (LW II, 77, 2). "I designates . . . the pure substance" (LW II, 232, 8f.). The substance relevant to the "I" is self-subsistent in every way. The substance on which the "I" is grounded is a substance without any accident (LW II, 239, 4f.). The pure substance of the "I" lacks all quality. That which is creaturely is unable to be "I" since it is not pure substance. The "I" is not of this world, since it "designates the pure substance" (LW III, 432, 8f.). Since the human being is not pure substance, the "I" does not belong per se to him. "Nothing apart from God is pure substance" (LW III, 433, 2f.). The "I" is *substantialiter* "I" where it is pure substance, and thereby pure Being. This is not to be understood in a neuter sense, but *personaliter* (LW II, 20, 3f.). The one "I" which is "I" is the "I" of God. God is *ego singulariter* (LW III, 433, 2) since, as pure substance, he does not depend on this world (LW III, 432, 8f.), but is autonomous in his own self. The "I" is related to the *unum dei*: "Ego,' the word 'I,' is proper to no one other than God alone in his unity" (DW II, 68, 4f.).

In the birth of the Son, God utters the "I." This uttering of the "I" is present actuality from eternity to eternity. But because of his creaturely human existence, it is impossible for the human person to utter the "I" (LW IV, 198, 2). It is impossible per se for that which is creaturely to say "I." It is necessary to renounce the "I" defined by the creature in order to receive a share in the genuine, ontic "I" (LW IV, 198, 13–199, 1). If the selfish "I" is renounced, then discovery of the "I" leads not to the destruction, but rather to the ontological building up of true human existence—and the humble human person has understood this. By fundamentally disregarding the selfish worldly "I," the humble person discovers the existing true "I." By understanding himself in principle on the basis of what he is in God, he is a genuinely existent "I," since it is only oneness with God that permits the "I" to be an uncovered "I."

I am I, standing in the first cause. Eckhart justifies this affirmation through the pre-creaturely ideal existence of the "I": "When I stood in my first cause, I had no cause, and then I was the cause of my own self; . . . I desired nothing, since I was an empty Being and I was the act of knowing myself in the enjoyment of the truth. Then I wanted myself, and wanted no other thing; what I wanted, that I was; and what I was, that I wanted. And here I stood, empty of God and of all things. But when I went out of my own free will and received my created Being, then I had a God; for before the creatures existed, God was not 'God,' but he was what he was.

But when the creatures came into existence and they received their created Being, then God was not in his own self 'God,' but he was 'God' in the creatures" (DW II, 492, 3–493, 2).

When the "I" stands in the first cause, it is empty of its creaturely, unreal "I"-ness and of the God of the creatures. The God who is had by the creatures cannot be the giver of Being to the "I." One must do without this God in order to become "I." "Therefore I ask God that he may make me empty of God, for my essential Being is above God . . . as the beginning of the creatures. For in that Being of God where God is above all Being and all differentiation, I myself was: there I wanted myself and knew myself in accordance with my Being, which is eternal—but not in accordance with my coming into existence, which is temporal. And therefore I am unborn, and in keeping with my unborn state I can never die. In keeping with my unborn state, I have existed eternally and am now, and I will remain eternally. What I am in accordance with the [creaturely] state of being born, will . . . perish, for it is mortal. . . . In my [eternal] birth all things were born, and I was the cause of my own self and of all things . . . I am the cause of God's being the God [of the creatures]; if I did not exist, God would not be God [as the beginning of the creatures]" (DW II, 502, 6–504, 3).

The "I" belongs to me alone as "I" and does not need anyone else, not even God as the beginning of the creatures: this presupposes that "I am *one* with him [God]; it is . . . a unity" (DW II, 63, 6f.). It is only in the light of God that I see and am the "I" (LW IV, 198, 4ff.). I am this "I" when, through the birth of God, I become the Son of God. The "human being, the Son of God, the one born of God, (is) not of this world" (LW III, 385, 29), but is of the God who speaks the "I." The authentic uttering of the "I" takes place on the basis of the birth of God in the soul, for God speaks "I" in the soul. God's "birth is his work, and the birth is the Son. God accomplishes this work in the innermost realm of the soul, and in such a hidden manner that neither angel nor saint knows about it, and even the soul itself cannot contribute to it in any way except by suffering it to happen; it belongs alone to God. This is why the Father genuinely says: 'I'" (DW II, 118, 4–8). Through the birth of God in the soul, the human "I" breaks through one's own will and the will of God as the beginning of the creatures, and "receives the gift that I and God are one. Then I am what I was, and I neither decrease nor increase, for there I am an immovable cause which moves all things. . . . Here, God is one with the spirit" (DW II, 505, 4–8). God gives birth to the "I" with great delight and joy. He gives birth to the Son and thus to the "I" ever anew and ever joyfully (DW II, 117, 1ff.). In this way, he makes it possible for the human person to be "I."

Being "I" means being free of enslavements, of every absolutization of the manifold existents. To the extent that the human person is "I," he is free from subjugations to the self, to the world, and to his creaturely, utilitarian-ideological images of God. These do not permit the human person to become "I," to become what he is a priori thanks to his origin. Rather, they pervert him and lead him into destructive slaveries to existents that have established themselves and are turned in upon themselves. The "I" is "at home" in the unity with the God who continuously gives Being and thus makes "I" possible. One who substitutes God here with something else kills the "*I*" *originaliter*, by allowing the *ego-singulariter* to perish in the multiplicity of secondary existences in an attempt to establish fundamental causality. The "I" can be born, and thus become what it is, only through *the* work of the Father, namely the divine birth of the Son.

4. THE HUMBLE PERSON WHO OBEYS GOD AND GOES OUT OF THAT WHICH IS HIS OWN

Humility is supremely important for Eckhart: "The highest height of sublimity lies in the deep ground of humility" (DW V, 293, 5f.). It is thus significant that Eckhart defines the humble human person as the (right) human person *per se*: "The human being is called *homo*, from *humus* [soil], and from *humus* comes *humilitas*" (LW III, 265, 4). "Human being' . . . means . . . who bows down before God with all that he is and that is his . . . and looks upwards at God—not at that which is his, since he knows that this is behind, below, alongside him. This is full and genuine humility, which takes its name from the earth" (DW V, 115, 20–24).

Eckhart draws a distinction between humility of nature and humility of grace. The former is characterized by level-headedness in everything one does, the latter by the fact "that the human person attributes to his own self as little of all the good that God has ever shown him . . . as he did when he did not exist" (i.e. in his pre-creaturely ideal Being). The humble person does not rely on himself, but waits for the grace through which the humility of nature is surpassed by the humility of the spirit (DW II, 450–51, 1). The humble person does not submit to the pluralities of the creaturely existents. His humility is not arbitrary or blind, but has a clear goal. It "consists in the total submission of the person to God alone" (LW III, 265, 11f.). The humble person is empty, cut off from the pressure to absolutize existents. He regards the existent as nothing.

One who "wishes to receive from on high," as the humble person does, "must necessarily be below, in true humility" (DW I, 73, 7f.). When he

bows down before the one One, the divine grace flows into the humble person and he receives the powerful light of reason (DW II, 346, 3–6). He gains a share in the rationality of God, since humility is “a root in the ground of the Godhead in which it is planted, so that it has its Being alone in the eternal One” (DW I, 247, 3f.). God can work “only in the ground of humility, for the more deeply [the human being] is in humility, the more receptive is he for God.” Accordingly, “The more the human being is immersed in the ground of true humility, the more will he be immersed in the ground of the divine essence” (DW III, 580, 5f.; 581, 3f.). Appealing to Jn 17:11, Eckhart maintains the unity of the humble person and God: “*Humilis homo et deus non sunt duo, sed sunt unum.*” For without this unity, the human being cannot dwell in humility (LW V, 324, 20–325, 9). When humility stands rooted in the divine ground of humility, it flourishes. “In his groundless depth,” God turns to the humble person “in the depths of his humility,” bringing about the unity between the humble person and God: “This humble person has as much power over God as he has power over his own self. . . . God and this humble person are utterly one and not two; for what God does, that he too does; and what God wills, that he too wills; and what God is, that he too is: one life and one Being. . . . If this person were in hell, God would have to go into hell to him, and hell would have to become a kingdom of heaven for him” (DW I, 246, 9–20).

The One bestows *theosis* (divinization) on the human being who is marked by the humility that has its roots in the Godhead. “To the human being who thus in all his works intends and loves nothing other than God, God gives his divinity. Everything that the human being works, [God works,] for my humility gives God his divinity” (DW I, 240, 7–10). This is made possible by God’s abandoning his exaltation in view of the interiorization of the human person in the birth of God in the soul. God *de-exalts* himself “*ad intra*, so that we may be *exalted*,” so that what was above was found within you, as the humble person, and you, as the humble person, find in yourself what is above (DW I, 236, 6–11f.). God gives birth to you today eternally in your humility as his Son; even more than this, he gives birth to himself as himself. “I (God) have given birth to myself [as] you and to you [as] myself eternally. Nevertheless, it is not enough for the noble, humble person that he is the only-begotten Son to whom the Father has given birth eternally; he also wants to be the Father and to enter into the same equality with the eternal Fatherhood and to give birth to the one from whom I am eternally born. . . .; then God comes into that which is his own. Hand yourself over to God: so God belongs to you, just as he belongs to his own self” (DW I, 238, 2–9).

5. THE HUMAN PERSON AS A *BÎWORT* OF GOD AND A RATIONAL HEARER OF THE WORD

Since all the creatures were created out of nothing, they have “their true origin” in this nothing (DW I, 94, 4f.). Of itself, that which is creaturely is *purum nihil*. As a creature, therefore, I am pure nothing (DW I, 80, 12). Nothing “receives nothing and can be neither *subiectum esse* nor *terminus esse*” (LW I, 161, 12f.). The fact that I exist as a creature is not something I owe to myself; rather, I am “from something other” than myself (LW II, 282, 6) (i.e. I am a receptive Being). “All the creatures have no Being, since their Being depends on the presence of God. Were God to turn away from all creatures only for one moment, they would perish” (DW I, 70, 3f.). Like every creaturely existent, the human person is in the “middle between God and nothing” (LW III, 185, 8). Nevertheless, as *animal rationale* he is an existent equipped with *intellectus* and thereby a being with knowledge. Thanks to the birth of God in the soul, he is a being marked by God and a being who knows God. As a creaturely Being, the human person owes his Being, which receives Being, to the absolute Being of God which bestows Being.

What then is the human person? He is a *bîwort* (“accompanying word”) of God (DW I, 158, 8). *Bîwort* is defined as follows: “The most specifically proper thing one can say of God is word and truth. God called himself a word. . . . ‘In the beginning was the Word’ [Jn 1:1], and this means that with this Word, one is a *bîwort*” (DW I, 154, 9–155, 3). The human person *is* (ontologically) a human person by being with the Word. It is through the birth of the Word in the birth of God in the soul that the human person comes to be with the Word. The human person is an accompanying word of God. He “should be like a morning star: always in the presence of God and always present to [him] and equally close and exalted above all earthly things, and an accompanying word with the Word” (DW I, 156, 11–157, 2). Being with the Word is being in the presence of God. The human person who is a *bîwort* has a relationship of univocal immediacy to God. He lives out of that which is most proper and specific to God. Through the birth of God in the soul, being a *bîwort* affects the distinctive rationality of the human person, since “God’s blessedness lies in the working of the reason *ad intra*, whereby the Word remains within. The soul should then be a *bîwort* and engage in a work with God, in order to take its blessedness in the act of knowing which is suspended within itself, where God is blessed” (DW I, 158, 4–7). The univocal character of the *bîwort* applies even despite the personal difference which is not abolished between God

and the human person as Son. The *bî* in "being a *bîwort*" designates the univocal character of Being: in other words, there is certainly a difference of person here, but not in terms of nature (LW III, 7, 8f.). Eckhart argues that this is demonstrated by Jn 1:1, "The Word was with God, and God was the Word': it was the same in the same nature" (DW I, 109, 2f.).

In view of the fundamental importance that Eckhart attaches to the *bîwort*, it is only logical that he should insistently summon the hearer/reader to be a *bîwort* of the one Word of the one One (DW I, 158, 8f.).

The Word is spoken by God in the reason. It "appertains to the reason and is called *verbum*, just as the Word is and stands in the reason" (DW III, 266, 7f.). The human person, the *ens rationale*, is the rational hearer of the Word. The Word is received in the reason (DW II, 229, 1). The knowledge of the Word comes in, with, and during the birth of God in the soul. As one who hears, the Son born of God is one who knows the Word. "One who is of God, that is to say born, hears the words of God' [Jn 8:47]. For God's speaking is begetting, and hearing him is being begotten" (LW III, 418, 9f.). God has spoken to us by making us the Son in the Son. It is only in the Son that God can be heard by the Son, since he speaks only in the Son (LW III, 420, 1-3). The hearing of the Word in the Son brings a double harvest. First, it is in this act of hearing that life is given to the *filii dei* (Jn 5:25f.); secondly, according to Lk. 11:28, *beatitudo* is the fruit of the hearers (LW III, 420, 4-6). The hearer of the Word is a rational being, namely the human person. In the first act of receiving in the reason, the Word is received as a true word, "before it is formed in my thoughts." The eternal Word is spoken "inwardly in the heart of the soul, . . . in the reason: it is in there that the birth takes place" (DW II, 229, 1-230, 1). The rational receiving of the Word is correlated to the theological ground of the speaking of the Word, since God the Father speaks in himself *vernünfftliclichen* the eternal Word (DW II, 434, 4-435, 1). The human person, created in accordance with the *imago dei* as *ens rationale*, does not receive the Word because of rational endeavors on his own part: he can receive the Word *vernünfftliclichen* because of God's *vernünfftliclichen* speaking of the eternal Word in his own self. The Father is the giver of the eternal Word, in which he gives divine Being and life. "The Father from heaven gives you his eternal Word, and in the same Word he gives you eternal life and his own Being and his divinity together; for the Father and the Word are *two* Persons and *one* life and *one* Being, undivided." The Father takes the Son who hears the Word (who is not identical with the Father, but is a distinct person) into the reason and the truth of the one Word, which contains within itself life and Being (DW II, 436, 7-437, 3). This means that the Son

who hears the Word is given the power of the Word that gives birth both to him and to all things. "When the Father takes you into this same light [of the Word] so that you may rationally look at this light in the same way as he knows himself and all things in accordance with his fatherly power in this Word, the same Word according to speech and truth, . . . he gives you the power to give birth with him to your own self and to all things; and he gives you his own power, like that of the same Word. Thus you are giving birth unceasingly, with the Father in the Father's power, to your own self and to all things in a present 'now.' . . . For the Father and you yourself and all things and the same Word are one in the light" (DW II, 436, 10–438, 2).

In Meister Eckhart, the Word and the knowledge of the Word are determined originally by the *first Word* from which all words derive their power. The first Word is the Word of God the Father, who is above everything that we can *put into words*. He speaks it in the Son Jesus Christ as the *one Word*. Through the birth of God in the soul, the Word is born in the human person. I, the human person, become the Son and thus the *bîwort*. As the *auditor verbi*, the Son who is born of God is the one who knows the Word. The human person, as a rational being, is the *auditor verbi*, since it is in the reason that the Word is received. The human word, which is subject to mutability in time and to plurality, is not a perfect word, but *bezeichnung des wortes*.

6. THE SINNER, THE RIGHTEOUS PERSON, AND THE ONE WHO LOVES

Eckhart agrees with the tradition in defining sin first of all as death (Rom. 6:2), since it is a turning away from God, Being, and life (LW IV, 162, 11f.) and hence a turning away from blessedness and virtue (DW II, 14, 1f.). Accordingly, the human person ought not to want to commit sin in time and eternity (DW V, 232, 3–5). God and sin are incompatible. Sin is *negatio esse* and thereby a negation of God's self-communication. "God is . . . pure Being, and sin is nothing and removes [one] from God" (DW II, 597, 6). The sinner gives primary importance to nothing, but God gives primary importance to Being.

In addition to the pejorative understanding of sin, Eckhart also knows an affirmative understanding: "The inclination to sin is always useful to the human person," bringing benefit and gain (DW V, 212, 9f.). "The more gravely he sins, the more does he praise God" (LW III, 426, 9f.). God smites the sinner in order, via the sin, to open up to him the path to salvation.

God "is very ready" to suffer all the damage of sin, "in order that the human person may subsequently" come "to a great knowledge of his love" and to fiery thankfulness (DW V, 234, 7–10). To bear the frailties of sins is "a great training" in the human person's trust in God (DW V, 301, 7–9). God, who alone forgives sin, forgives readily, and "the greater and graver the sins are, all the more immeasurably is God pleased to forgive them" (DW V, 238, 2f.). Forgiveness creates complete trust. One to whom much is forgiven will love much (DW V, 244, 2f.). God brings the human person "out of a sinful life into a divine life" (DW V, 232, 7) on the path of righteousness.

The righteous person lives out of the one righteousness of the one God, which appertains *univoce* both to God and to the righteous person (LW III, 141, 15–142, 1). All the righteous are righteous because they are one in the one God (LW II, 366, 6f.). Righteousness comes to the human person through God's justifying action, for "God justifies . . . the believers directly through his own self, not in cooperation" (LW II, 297, 10f.). The human person is righteous, not because of that which is his own; rather, the righteous person "receives his whole Being . . . from righteousness alone." All the righteousness of the Son is due to the unbegotten righteousness of God the Father (LW II, 392, 5–393, 5). Human persons should reflect not so much on what they do, as on what they are. "If you are righteous, then your works too are righteous. One should not think about staking holiness on an action," since "it is not the works that make us holy." "Rather, one should base holiness on Being . . . No matter what works are performed by those who are not of great Being, nothing will come out of them" (DW V, 197, 4–198, 7). In his whole Being, the human person who is righteous is a son of the righteousness of God (LW II, 392, 10–12). Through the birth of God in the soul, the righteous person, as the Son, is conformed to righteousness. "The Father gives birth to his Son as the righteous person and to the righteous person as his Son" (DW II, 258, 2f.).

The author of righteousness transposes the human person into love. God "himself causes love in us and gives us the love with which we love" (LW IV, 69, 3f.). Because God, who is that which is First and is the cause of all that exists, is pure Being, he loves all that *is* (LW II, 587, 3f.). This is the ontotheological ground of love. God, as the first love, is the measure of all that is loved. One who loves God with all his heart loves himself, and his neighbor like himself, for the sake of God (LW IV, 271, 9–272, 1). "The love with which we love is the Holy Spirit" (DW II, 41, 5). This love communicates love, opens up the *contemplatio* and the *cognitio* of divine things, and makes us similar to God (LW IV, 338, 4–14). The movement towards the object is love, since the *causa* and *radix* of love is the *similitudo*

(LW IV, 335, 8–11). Only one who himself loves can know about love (LW III, 638, 4f.).

7. THE POOR PERSON, *ABGESCHIEDEN* AND *GELASSEN*,
AND A FREE PERSON WHO IS A "FACE OF PEACE"

When the human person's own will governs his relationship to himself and to things, servitude takes root. It is *Gelassenheit* that should govern the human person, and this arrives with *Abgeschiedenheit* and poverty. The human person "should first leave his own self, for then he has left all things" (DW V, 194, 3f.). "The highest . . . that the human person is able to leave is that he leaves God through God," for in this way "God remains for him as God exists in his own self" (DW I, 196, 6–197, 3). Like poverty and *Abgeschiedenheit*, *Gelassenheit* has ontological, epistemological, and moral dimensions. What Eckhart says of the poor person applies here: "A poor person is one who wills nothing, and knows nothing, and has nothing" (DW II, 488, 5f.). The poor person who is *abgeschieden* and *gelassen* renounces in his existence, his knowledge, and his action all *koufmannschaft* and "having modes," all the creaturely, rational, ontological, moral, and religious self-insurances. He entrusts everything to God: "Let God work in you" (LW V, 307, 2). When the human person is *abgeschieden*—nothing, empty—he is fused by God, through the birth of God in the soul, into the "simple One" of God, so that "God may be God in you" (DW I, 93, 7–94, 7).

The person who is poor, *abgeschieden*, and *gelassen* "lives now in an empty freedom" (DW I, 246, 5f.), since "God comes into the soul with right freedom" (Pfeiffer, p. 348, 40). Freedom, which is given its form and its essence by God, arrives, and the one who is shaped in this way learns how to be "without ties (*ledic*) in the midst of his working" (DW V, 275, 10). Unlimited openness, freedom, and breadth are bestowed on the one who knows a ground. Empty freedom, rest, and *Gelassenheit* disclose themselves to him. "God does not compel the will. He makes it free, so that it wills nothing other than what God himself is and what freedom itself is. And the spirit is not able to will anything other than what God wills. And that is not a lack of freedom for the spirit: it is its own proper freedom" (DW II, 78, 2–5).

The human person should be "a face of peace" (DW II, 351, 1f.). "That which is born of God seeks peace and runs into peace" (DW I, 118, 5f.). The

birth of God in the soul transposes the human person into peace, since the rule applies: "to the extent one is in God, to that extent is one in peace." Peace is the hallmark of the human person's existence in God (DW V, 308, 5–7). A fruitful interiority that is solidly established and determines that which is external, an interiority grounded in a faith which knows (and implies openness and breadth)—this is what constitutes the Eckhartian human person. This is the human person with a tranquil heart.²

² [English translation: Brian McNeil]

ECKHART'S ISLAMIC AND JEWISH SOURCES:
AVICENNA, AVICEBRON, AND AVERROES

Alessandro Palazzo

Islamic and Jewish authors are part of the rich and diverse array of Meister Eckhart's sources. Compared to other Latin authors, however, Eckhart was quite selective in using Arabic and Hebrew works which had been made available to Latin readers during the 12th and 13th centuries. Apart from a few references to Algazel's *Metaphysica* (two), Alhazen's *Optica* (two), Alfraganus's *Rudimenta astronomica* (one), Haly's commentary on Pseudo-Ptolemy's *Centiloquium* (one), Alkindi's *De radiis* (one), and Isaac Israeli's *Liber de diffinitionibus* (one),¹ Eckhart's contact with Muslim and Jewish learning was limited to essentially four thinkers: Maimonides, Avicenna, Averroes, and Avicebron.² These authors were all, although to different degrees, major resources for the Dominican Master in inspiring crucial themes and supporting key aspects of his thought. A reflection on how these sources were used by Eckhart and how they contributed an influence on his teaching is thus necessary for a better understanding of his thought.

Yet so far, only the Maimonides–Eckhart relationship has received the assiduous scholarly attention that it deserves: several studies have examined the numerous issues and fields in which Maimonides—after

¹ I will cite Eckhart's works according to their critical editions: Meister Eckhart, *Die deutschen und die lateinischen Werke*, hrsg. im Auftrage der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft. *Die deutschen Werke*, edited by J. Quint and G. Steer, 5 vols (Stuttgart: 1936ff.) [= DW]; *Die lateinischen Werke*, edited by E. Benz, C. Christ, B. Decker, H. Fischer, B. Geyer, J. Koch, E. Seeberg, L. Sturlese, K. Weiß, and A. Zimmermann, 5 vols (Stuttgart: 1936) [= LW]. The explicit references to Algazel are to be found in LW II, 158, 15 and LW III, 224, 5; as for Alhazen, who is referred to as "perspectivus" and whose work is named "Perspectiva," see LW I/ 1, 257, 3 and LW III, 254, 4; Haly is cited in LW III, 216, 8; Alfraganus is quoted in LW V, 18, 3; the *De radiis* of Alkindi, who is named Iacob, is quoted in LW IV, 176, 9; Isaac's *Liber de diffinitionibus* is referred to as "ein geschrift" in DW V, 109, 8.

² To these one might also add the *Liber de causis*, an Arab monotheistic reworking of Proclus' *Elements of Theology* and, to a lesser extent, of Plonitus' *Enneads*. For Eckhart's use of the *Liber de causis*, see the recent essay by Fiorella Retucci, "Her ûf sprichet ein heidenischer meister in dem buoche, daz dâ heizet daz lieht der liehte: Eckhart, il *Liber de causis* e Proclo," in *Studi sulle fonti di Meister Eckhart I*, ed. L. Sturlese, Dokimion Neue Schrifreihe zur Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie 34 (Fribourg: 2008), 135–66, which includes previous literature on this subject.

Aristotle, Eckhart's most cited non-Christian authority—influenced Eckhart. Furthermore, a significant agreement in the project of a philosophical interpretation of the Old Testament has been noted between the two thinkers.³

The impact on Eckhart of the three remaining sources (Avicenna, Averroes, and Avicbron) has been much less studied. A few articles and essays have been devoted to determining the influence of these sources within specific writings by Eckhart.⁴ However, before Kurt Flasch published his *Meister Eckhart: Die Geburt der "Deutschen Mystik aus dem Geist der arabischen Philosophie"* in 2006, no study, except for an essay by Fernand Brunner on the Avicbron–Eckhart relationship, had looked at the issue

³ J. Koch, "Meister Eckhart und die jüdische Religionsphilosophie des Mittelalters," *Jahresbericht der Schlesischen Gesellschaft für vaterländische Cultur* 101 (1928), 134–48, republished in J. Koch, *Kleine Schriften* 1, (Storie et Letteratura) 127 (Rome: 1973), 349–65; E. Reffke, "Eckhartiana IV. Studien zum Problem der Entwicklung Meister Eckharts im Opus Tripartitum," in *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 57 (1938), 19–95, esp. 77–95; P. Heidrich, *Maimunizitate bei Meister Eckhart* (Dissertation, Rostock: 1959); H. Liebeschütz, "Meister Eckhart und Moses Maimonides," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 54 (1972), 64–96; B. McGinn, "Introduction. 2. Meister Eckhart on Speaking about God," in *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, ed. Bernard McGinn (New York: 1986), 15–30; R. Imbach, "Ut ait Rabbi Moyses. Maimonidische Philosopheme bei Thomas von Aquin und Meister Eckhart," *Collectanea Franciscana* 60 (1990), 99–116, esp. 108–13; K. Ruh, "Neuplatonische Quellen Meister Eckharts," in *Contemplata aliis tradere. Studien zum Verhältnis von Literatur und Spiritualität*, ed. C. Brinker, U. Herzog, N. Largier, and P. Michel, Studien zum Verhältnis von Literatur und Spiritualität (Bern: 1995), 317–52, esp. 340–50; Y. Schwartz, "'Ecce est locus apud me': Maimonides und Eckharts Raumvorstellung als Begriff des Göttlichen," in *Raum und Raumvorstellung im Mittelalter*, ed. J.A. Aertsen and A. Speer, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 25 (Berlin/ New York: 1998), 348–64; B. McGinn, "Sapientia Judaeorum: the Role of Jewish Philosophers in Some Scholastic Thinkers," in *Continuity and Change. The Harvest of Late Medieval and Reformation History*, ed. R.J. Bast and A.C. Gow (Leiden: 2000), 206–28, esp. 221–25; Y. Schwartz, "To Thee is silence praise:" Meister Eckhart's Reading in Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* (Tel Aviv: 2002); Y. Schwartz, "Meister Eckharts Schriftauslegung als Maimonidisches Projekt," in *Moses Maimonides (1138–1204). His Religious, Scientific, and Philosophical Wirkungsgeschichte in Different Cultural Contexts*, ed. G.K. Hasselhoff and O. Fraisse, *Ex Oriente Lux: Rezeptionen und Exegesen als Traditionskritik* 4 (Würzburg: 2004), 173–208; G.K. Hasselhoff and Dicit Rabbi Moyses, *Studien zum Bild von Moses Maimonides im lateinischen Westen vom 13. bis zum 15. Jahrhundert* (Würzburg: 2004), esp. 205–21; Y. Schwartz, "Zwischen Einheitsmetaphysik und Einheitshermeneutik: Eckharts Maimonides-Lektüre und das Datierungsproblem des 'Opus tripartitum,'" in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt*, ed. A. Speer and L. Wegener, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 32 (Berlin: 2005), 259–79. See Y. Schwartz in the present volume.

⁴ See, e.g. Loris Sturlese's comment on the German Sermon 17, which is rich in Avicenna quotations: L. Sturlese, "Seele und intellektueller Seelengrund auf Deutsch und Latein. Eine Lektüre von Pred. 17 Quint," in L. Sturlese, *Homo divinus. Philosophische Projekte in Deutschland zwischen Meister Eckhart und Heinrich Seuse* (Stuttgart: 2007), 61–77, first published in *Lectura Eckhardi. Predigten Meister Eckharts von Fachgelehrten gelesen und gedeutet*, 1, ed. G. Steer and L. Sturlese (Stuttgart: 1998), 75–96.

of Eckhart's Muslim and Jewish non-Maimonidean sources as a historical problem worthy of specific consideration per se.

Besides having several valuable qualities which will be noted below, Brunner's essay is a very good example of the sort of work that is needed in the field of Eckhart's sources, since it does not look for general analogies between the doctrines of Avicenna and Eckhart, nor for a supposed common orientation of their thought, but provides a careful text-based analysis of the passages in which Eckhart quotes Avicenna. This approach enabled Brunner to come to solid conclusions by delineating all the doctrinal areas in which Eckhart is truly indebted to Avicenna.⁵ Thanks to this method, the results of Brunner's investigation constitute a necessary starting point for any further enquiry concerning the Avicenna–Eckhart relationship. The discussion of this subject in the current chapter will also be a refinement of and a supplement to his conclusions.

The recent study by Kurt Flasch is the first comprehensive and systematic work devoted to the use of Arabic sources (Averroes, Avicenna, and Maimonides, who was a Jewish thinker but whose *Guide for the Perplexed* was written in Arabic) in Eckhart's writings and thought.⁶ Like Brunner, Flasch has conducted extensive text-based research by accurately examining Eckhart's quoting of these sources. In so doing, Flasch has managed to show the relevance of Averroes, Avicenna, and Maimonides for a number of crucial teachings of the Dominican Master. Moreover, the German scholar has drawn attention to the role played by the analyses and the discussions contained in the works of Albert the Great and Dietrich of Freiberg, which paved the way for and strongly affected Eckhart's reading of Arabic philosophical heritage, especially Averroes.

Notwithstanding their many merits, the studies by Brunner and Flasch do not completely fill the gap in the scholarship on Eckhart's Muslim and Jewish sources. This chapter, which follows in the wake of another study of mine on the presence of Avicenna in Eckhart's work,⁷ is intended to contribute to our understanding of Eckhart's use of Avicenna, Avicenna, and Averroes. How did Eckhart approach and work on the texts of these thinkers? What were the doctrines that he approved of and what were

⁵ F. Brunner, "Maitre Eckhart et Avicenna," in *Lectionum varietates. Hommage a Paul Vignaux (1904–1987)*, ed. J. Jolivet, Z. Kaluza, and A. de Libera, *Études de philosophie médiévale* 65 (Paris: 1991), 133–54.

⁶ K. Flasch, *Meister Eckhart. Die Geburt der "Deutschen Mystik" aus dem Geist der arabischen Philosophie* (Munich: 2008).

⁷ A. Palazzo, "'Ez spricht gar ein hôher meister: Eckhart e Avicenna,'" in *Studi sulle fonti di Meister Eckhart I*, ed. L. Sturlese, 71–111 (see note 2 above).

those, if any, which he criticized? How were these doctrines absorbed into his thinking, and how have they shaped his thought? These are some of the questions I will try to answer.

To do this, I have made a thorough analysis of the texts in which Eckhart quotes these sources. In particular, I have considered both quotations that explicitly mention the author's name and/or the title of the work, and German texts in which Eckhart refers to these sources anonymously as "meister"—indeed, in the German writings, Eckhart's quotation technique changes and, except for a unique case,⁸ he does not cite any of these sources by name.

The results of this investigation are presented here in three sections, one devoted to each of the three sources studied. In each section some statistics on Eckhart's use of these sources (number of quotations, their distribution throughout Eckhart's writings, faithfulness to the original texts, identification of these texts, use of intermediary sources) are provided and commented on; then an overview of the themes and the teachings in relation to which these sources are cited by Eckhart is given, and some specific cases are discussed in greater detail.

I am fully aware that a study such as this does not address all the problems involved in the complex issue of Eckhart's Islamic and Jewish sources, for it leaves other ways of quoting (indefinite *quidam* quotations, implicit citations, tacit use of terminology or concepts) as well as more general questions not related to textual dependence (e.g. possible conceptual and doctrinal affinities, the following of similar lines of reasoning, Eckhart's recourse to these sources examined in relation to the way other scholastics used and read them, etc.) unexplored. Yet I am firmly convinced that a textual study of this kind is the necessary first step in further broadening and deepening the investigation. In addition, such a study has at least two advantages. First, nominal citations and secure *meister* quotations supply a dossier of texts in which Eckhart expresses "on the record" his views on Avicennian, Gabirolian, and Averroean teachings; as a consequence, it is this body of texts that one first has to turn to in order to reconstruct the Dominican's attitude towards these sources objectively. Some of the implicit or *quidam* quotations registered by the

⁸ This is the Avicenna quotation contained in the treatise *Von abegescheidenheit*: see Eckhardus, *Von abegescheidenheit*, DW V, 410, 7–411, 3. For an analysis of this quotation and the identification of its direct source, see A. Palazzo, "Ez sprichet gar ein hôher meister," 87–94.

editors of Meister Eckhart's *Opera omnia* or suggested by other scholars are, by contrast, far from certain. Therefore, using them as a starting point for our research might have resulted in a conjectural and distorted picture of Eckhart's approach to these authors.

Second, in light of Eckhart's actual quotations, it is possible to fully appreciate how particular *his* interpretations of Avicenna, Avicbron, and Averroes were, and how different *his sense* of what these sources had taught was from other scholastics' perceptions and modern historiographical reconstructions. Indeed, while some of the most burning issues of the 13th and 14th centuries that were derived from, or somehow associated with, Avicenna, Avicbron, and Averroes—such as the doctrine of four intellects, hylomorphism, and monopsychism—are scarcely or even never witnessed to by Eckhart's quotations, less usual motifs and topics occur with a surprisingly high frequency (such as the Avicennian concept of the soul as an intelligible world; the Gabirolian idea that, by communicating itself to matter, form obeys the First Maker, who is originator of the universal flow of form; and Averroes's distinction between the bath in the mind of the craftsman and in matter in external reality).

1. AVICENNA

1.1 *Avicenna Quotations: Statistical Data*

Avicenna is one of Eckhart's favorite philosophical sources, by far the most cited among Islamic authors: 102 explicit Avicenna quotations are to be found throughout all his writings. To these we can add 21 quotations referring to Avicenna as "meister" in the German writings.⁹ There

⁹ I summarize in section 1.1 the data already presented in A. Palazzo, "‘Ez sprichet gar ein hôher meister,'" 72–74. A list of all the nominal and *meister* quotations of Avicenna, grouped according to the Avicennian writings from which they are taken, is to be found in the appendix to that essay (97–111). In the statistics reported above I have taken into consideration another quotation which was not included in that list: Eckhardus, *Pr.* 107, DW IV, 724, 17–725, 18: "Hie zuo wellent etliche liute wîsliche sprechen: sô got al ein ist einvaltic, war umbe er niht alliu dinc al einez enschüefe als die engel." Indeed, Avicenna seems to be among those "etliche liute" due to his emanatistic theory. A further *meister* quotation might be added to the list but, since it is not a certain Avicenna quotation, it was not counted in the statistics: see Eckhardus, *Pr.* 7, DW I, 120, 4–5: "Ein meister sprichet ein schoene wort: was eines rüeret liplich dinc, daz enkumet niemer dar in." Joseph Quint, editor of the DW I, referred to a parallel passage in the Latin sermon XLVII which is an explicit quotation from Augustine: Eckhardus, *Sermo XLVII* n. 482, LW IV, 397, 12–398, 1:

are seven Avicennian works cited (the *Liber de philosophia prima* [= *Metaphysics*], the *Liber de anima* [*On the soul*], the *Sufficientia*, the *De animalibus*, the *Liber Canonis*, the *Logyca*, and the chapter *De diluviis*),¹⁰ but, taken together, *Metaphysics* (68 LW+9 DW) and *On the soul* (18 LW+13 DW) supply most of the quotations (108); by contrast, the quotations from the *Sufficientia* (6 LW) and the *De animalibus* (6 LW) make up fewer than 10 per cent of all Avicenna quotations.

From the fact that all quotations mentioning Avicenna by name or explicitly referring to the titles of his works are scattered quite evenly throughout all Eckhart's major Latin works, one can infer that Avicenna was a constant dialogue partner of the Dominican master over the course of his career.

Avicenna's cited writings	LW	DW	Number of quotations
<i>Metaphysics</i>	68	9	77
<i>De anima</i>	18	13	31
<i>Sufficientia</i>	6	0	6
<i>De animalibus</i>	6	0	6
<i>Canon</i>	1	0	1
<i>Logyca</i>	1	0	1
<i>De diluviis</i>	1	0	1
Number of quotations	101	22	123

"Nota quomodo secundum Augustinum aliquid intimum nobis, scilicet anima, est, ubi nihil intrat corporale aut figuram habens corporis, quod soli deo dictum est." According to the editors of LW IV this quotation would be a reworking of Augustine's *De trinitate* 14 c.8 n. 11: see Augustine, *De trinitate*, ed. W.J. Mountain and F. Glorie, CCSL 50A (Turnhout: 1968), 14 8, n. 11, 435, 73–436, 26. Very close to the *meister* quotation, however, is also another parallel passage in the Latin Sermon IX which is an Avicenna quotation: Eckhardus, *Sermo IX* n. 98, LW IV, 93, 6–9: "Circa quod nota quomodo secundum Avicennam semel tactum condicione corporali nunquam recipitur nec in intellectu aut sensu, <sed> virtute luminis intellectualis exiuitur his omnibus antequam recipiatur." In its first part (until "recipitur"), this Avicenna quotation, which is a free reworking of a couple of loci of Avicenna's *De anima* (V c.2 and c.6), follows closely the *meister* quotation: "eines"- "semel," "rüeret"- "tactum," "líplich"- "corporali," "enkumet"- "recipitur," "niemer"- "numquam."

¹⁰ The *De diluviis* was in fact a partial translation of the *Metereology* of Avicenna's *Shifa*, in particular of the last chapter of the second book: see J.-M. Mandosio and C. Di Martino, "La 'Météorologie' d'Avicenne (Kitab al-Sifa' V) et sa diffusion dans le monde latin," in *Wissen über Grenzen. Arabisches Wissen und lateinisches Mittelalter*, ed. A. Speer and L. Wegener, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 33 (Berlin: 2006), 420.

Eckhart's writings	Number of Avicenna quotations
<i>Expositio s. Evangelii secundum Iohannem</i>	20
<i>Sermones</i>	19
<i>Expositio Libri Sapientiae</i>	17
<i>Expositio Libri Exodi</i>	12
<i>Expositio Libri Genesis</i>	12 ¹¹
<i>Liber parabolarum Genesis</i>	11
<i>Responsio ad articulos sibi impositos</i>	4
<i>Prologus generalis in Opus tripartitum</i>	3
<i>Prologus in Opus propositionum</i>	1
<i>Sermones et lectiones super Ecclesiastici</i>	1
<i>Quaestiones Parisienses</i>	1
<i>Von abegescheidenheit</i>	1
Number of quotations	102

As for the way Eckhart introduces his explicit quotations of Avicenna, it must be noted that in more than half of all cases he provides additional information besides Avicenna's name: in particular, in 11 cases he mentions the title of the work from which he is quoting; on nine occasions he also indicates from which book or section of the work he is quoting; and he supplies all the information needed to locate the passage which he is citing in 34 instances (title of work, book or section, and even chapter).

The number of literal quotations is considerable: slightly less than one-third of the explicit Avicenna quotations are verbatim (29 = *Metaphysics* [22], *On the soul* [5], *De animalibus* [2]), and of these most are longer than two lines in the Stuttgart edition of Eckhart's works.¹² The quantity of literal quotations and Eckhart's care in giving the exact coordinates of the Avicennian texts quoted show that he read firsthand at least Avicenna's *Metaphysics*, *On the soul*, and *De animalibus*.

1.2 The Quotations of Avicenna in the German Writings

The 22 citations of Avicenna contained in the German writings are not literal; the only one that is quite faithful to the original text is the following:¹³

¹¹ One quotation occurs only in the *recensio L* (= Cod. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud misc. 222) of the *Expositio Libri Genesis*: see Eckhardus, *Expositio Libri Genesis* n. 197, LW I/2, 227, 12.

¹² I also consider as literal those quotations in which the parts of an Avicennian passage are arranged in a different order and/or are separated by Eckhart's comments.

¹³ L. Sturlese, "Seele und intellektueller Seelengrund," 74, has hypothesized that Eckhart rendered "perfectio animae" with the formula "dersêle natûre und natiurlichiu volkommenheit"

Eckhardus, <i>Pr.</i> 17, DW I, 288, 7–289, 2	Avicenna, <i>Metaph.</i> 9, 7, ed. S. Van Riet, 510, 72–73
Ein meister spricht: der sêle natûre und natiurlîchiu volkomenheit ist, daz si in ir werde ein vernünfftigiu werlt, dâ got in sie gebildet hât aller dinge bilde.	... sua perfectio animae rationalis est ut fiat saeculum intelligibile, et describatur in ea forma totius

All the Avicenna citations in the German writings have parallels in the Latin works, and in some cases, they are very close to the wording adopted in those corresponding Latin passages: DW I, 136, 3–4/LW I/1, 579, 12–580, 2; DW I, 281, 10–12/LW IV, 458, 5; DW II, 138, 2–3/LW I/1, 382, 2–3; DW IV, 782, 17–18/LW IV, 385, 11–12. Contrasting the quotations in the German writings with their Latin parallels may first of all help recover the technical philosophical import of the terms Eckhart employed in the Avicenna quotations in the German writings, and second, it may also shed light on the complexity of the relationship between the vernacular and Latin in a bilingual author like Eckhart.

Burkhard Hasebrink has carried out a comparative analysis of a few loci in the German sermons 17 and 18—some of these loci are quotations of Avicenna texts—and their parallels respectively in the Latin sermons LV and XXXVI.¹⁴ A remarkable result of this analysis is the indication of the correspondence between one of the most crucial terms of Eckhart's German vocabulary: "grunt" which is part of the concept of "grunt der sêle," and the Latin term "essentia," a correspondence that emerges from the comparison of a *meister* quotation of Avicenna in the German Sermon 17 and a parallel explicit quotation in the Latin Sermon LV.¹⁵ Obviously, this correspondence is not sufficient to characterize Eckhart's concept of the ground of the soul as merely Avicennian, but Avicenna's notion of

because he, unlike Avicenna, was more interested in the essential principle of the soul than in its progress towards intellectual perfection.

¹⁴ B. Hasebrink, "Grenzverschiebung. Zu Kongruenz und Differenz von Latein und Deutsch bei Meister Eckhart," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 121 (1992), 386–97: the following Avicenna quotations, with their contexts, have been examined: DW I, 288, 7–289, 2; 281, 10–12; 281, 12–282, 1; 300, 3–301, 1.

¹⁵ B. Hasebrink, "Grenzverschiebung. Zu Kongruenz und Differenz," 393–97. The parallel texts are: Eckhardus, *Pr.* 17, DW I, 10–12: "Ez spricht ein meister: daz wort sêle daz enmeinet den grunt und die natûre der sêle enrüeret ez niht;" Eckhardus, *Sermo LV* n. 547, LW IV, 458, 4–5: "Nota: odire debet, quia *anima*, quia *sua*, quia *in hoc mundo*. Primum propter duo: primo, quia secundum Avicennam non est nomen essentiae in se."

the soul certainly played a role in Eckhart's framing of this concept, as his frequent reference to Avicenna when it comes to discussing the ground of the soul and its features suggests.¹⁶

Moreover, Hasebrink's study shows that the relationship between corresponding passages in Eckhart's Latin and German writings cannot be easily explained in terms of a mechanical translation *de verbo ad verbum*. In the cases examined by the German scholar, Eckhart's German texts diverge considerably from the Latin parallels on formal, stylistic, and structural grounds (use of rhetorical devices, omissions, additions, blending of different texts, change in the sequence of sections of text, text expansion, transformation of the text function, shift in the text focus, etc.), such that their genesis must be ascribed, not to a process of translation, but to an original rewriting on the part of Eckhart.

The complexity of this transposition process is well illustrated by a *meister* quotation found in the German Sermon "In occisione gladii" (Quint 8). The quotation is the vernacular version of a verbatim Avicenna quotation contained in the *Liber parabolarum Genesis*.¹⁷

The German text reduces the original Latin text: of the three verbs contained in the second sentence of the Avicenna original passage ("ut . . . mundetur"), Eckhart retains only "mundetur," rendered by "geliutert werde," and leaves out the other two ("perficiatur" and "sanctificetur"). Additionally, Eckhart omits "intellectus" to the effect that the subject of the sentence becomes the pronoun "si," which refers to the soul ("diu sêle"). Clearly, this is not a mechanical translation, but a free readaption of the Avicennian passage, which, in my opinion, is required by the new context within which the quotation is placed.

Eckhardus, *Pr.* 17, DW I, 136, 3–4

Eckhardus, *In Gen. II* n. 113, LW I/1, 579, 12–580, 2

Ein meister sprichet: diu sêle ist dar umbe dem lîbe gegeben, daz si geliutert werde.

Et hoc Avicenna De anima p. I capitulo ultimo dicit: "obligatio corporis cum anima" "est propter hoc, ut perficiatur intellectus contemplativus et sanctificetur et mundetur."

¹⁶ A. Palazzo, " 'Ez sprichet gar ein hôher meister,' " 78–79.

¹⁷ The original passage is: Avicenna, *Liber de anima seu sextus de naturalibus I–III*, ed. S. Van Riet (Louvain: 1972), I 5, 100, 85–87.

In the *Liber parabolicarum Genesis*, Eckhart quotes this passage while interpreting Gen. 2:18 (“Non est bonum hominem esse solum, faciamus ei adiutorium simile sibi”). According to Eckhart, one philosophical truth hidden behind this verse is that the human intellect—signified by “hominem” in the verse—being the lowest in the “intellectual region,” needs the assistance of the senses—the “adiutorium” of the verse—to work. The Avicenna quotation somehow radicalizes this exegesis of Gen. 2:18: the human soul is bound to the body, and, consequently, knows through the senses in order to attain intellectual perfection. The Avicenna quotation is therefore part of a discussion of a noetic subject matter.

Rather different is the setting within which Eckhart quotes the Avicennian passage in the German Sermon 8, which describes the conversion from a divided life to a unified one and urges readers to undergo it. This conversion is a radical breakthrough portrayed as departing from the creaturely life affected by opposition and temporality in order to enter “God’s dimension” in which life is being (DW I, 134, 4–7; 135, 1–136, 2). Indeed, being belongs to God alone, who is nothing but being and, therefore, is pure being (DW I, 130, 4–132, 4). Access to the realm of pure (“lûter”) being is granted only to the human soul, which is purified (“wirt geliutert”) in its body, morals, and inclinations (DW I, 136, 3–137, 2).

In light of this context, Eckhart’s rephrasing of the Avicenna passage becomes understandable: by leaving out “perficiatur” and “sanctificetur” and focusing on “mundetur” (= “geliutert werde”), Eckhart makes the Avicenna quotation a fitting point of departure for the last section of the sermon (DW I, 136, 3–137, 2) in which he depicts purification as the way to unified life, to pure being; moreover, by replacing “intellectus” with the soul, he makes clear that purification is not only a process affecting man’s cognitive faculties, but also an existential transformation which he as a whole undergoes.

1.3 *The Themes of the Avicenna Quotations*

Kurt Flasch has singled out four doctrinal areas in which Avicenna’s thought exerted a considerable influence on Eckhart: (a) ontology, (b) natural philosophy, (c) psychology, and (d) philosophical theology.¹⁸

1. Avicenna’s *Metaphysics* is one of the sources to which Eckhart’s ontology owes much. The key Eckhartian tenet *Esse est Deus*, for example, goes

¹⁸ K. Flasch, *Meister Eckhart. Die Geburt der “Deutschen Mystik,”* 129–36.

back, among others, to the Avicennian conception of God as Necessary Existent (LW II, 27, 10–11; 144, 6–7; 620, 4–5) whose first attribute is “quia est,” existence (LW II, 42, 6–7). Creatures, taken in themselves alone, are a pure nothing, and stand in need of existence in order to be. The idea that existence is perfect and desired by all creatures is another thesis witnessed in the Avicenna quotations (LW I/1, 153, 9–11; 319, 11–13; 387, 5–7; 487, 12; 569, 1–2; LW II, 273, 9–11; 512, 12–513, 2; LW III, 347, 8–11, 474, 5–7; LW IV, 165, 6–7; LW V, 288, 17–289, 1; 311, 16–17). Eckhart’s views on the metaphysical composition of creatures, in which two principles are distinguishable—the quiddity or essence (or *quod est*) which is their own and the existence (or *quo est*) that they derive from God and through which they come to exist—are largely dependent on other texts from Avicenna’s *Metaphysics* (LW I/1, 159, 1; 502, 8–9; 534, 4–5; LW II, 341, 6–7; LW V, 291, 13–292, 1). Central to Eckhart’s thought is also the Avicennian concept of being as the first and proper object of the intellect (LW I/1, 154, 4–5; LW II, 35, 5; 147, 10–11). Avicenna is also quoted in relation to the Eckhartian metaphysical doctrine that matter and form are essentially and immediately bound together (LW I/1, 498, 4–6).

2. For Eckhart, the *corpus* of the Avicennian writings was a mine of information about notions pertaining to natural philosophy: from animal behavior (LW I/1, 511, 1–3; LW 3, 614, 1–5; 655, 7–8) to human generation and reproduction (LW I/1, 591, 11–13; 663, 11–12; LW I/2, 227, 12; LW II, 417, 6–7), from spontaneous generation (LW I/1, 286, 2–3) to the power of the mind over the body (LW I/1, 429, 5–14; 430, 1–6; LW IV, 385, 11–12; 397, 8; DW IV, 782, 18), from physiology of vision (LW IV, 402, 10–403, 2) to optical phenomena (LW III, 397, 11–12), from chemical processes (LW V, 82, 13–14) to cosmological issues (LW II, 119, 7–8; 566, 4–5; LW III, 180, 12; LW V, 333, 6–7).

3. The psychology of Avicenna underlies some of Eckhart’s most characteristic notions: the *grunt* of the soul (LW III, 459, 7–10; LW IV, 458, 4–5; 459, 2–3; DW I, 53, 2–54, 1; 281, 10–12; 281, 12–282, 6; 417, 8–418, 1), the soul’s two *facies* or *antlütze* (LW I/1, 605, 7–9; DW II, 30, 1; 218, 2–4), and the idea that the rational soul’s perfection consists in its transformation into an intelligible world (LW I/1, 270, 13; LW IV, 106, 1; 460, 9; DW I, 49, 5; 288, 7; 291, 2; DW II, 220, 2; DW IV, 216, 36).¹⁹ Moreover, from the

¹⁹ According to K. Flasch, *Meister Eckhart. Die Geburt der “Deutschen Mystik,”* 135, Eckhart interprets the rational soul’s transformation into a *saeculum intelligibile* as the gist of the Gospel message urging everyone to hate his/her own soul. For a discussion of the *saeculum intelligibile* doctrine in the context of the German Sermon 17, see L. Sturlese, “Seele und intellektueller Seelengrund,” 70–76.

passages quoting the psychological teachings of Avicenna, two different aspects of the Eckhartian anthropology, which celebrates man's intellectual perfection and at the same time points out his bond with the body and his dependence on the senses, emerge.²⁰

Prophetology, a science which is at the intersection of psychology, noetics, metaphysics, and natural philosophy, is another field in which the impact of Avicenna on Eckhart's thought is most evident. As is clear from the treatment of the issue of prophetic knowledge in the *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (LW III, 209–28), Eckhart holds Avicenna's views on prophecy in high esteem. Not only does Eckhart find precise analyses of the psychological mechanisms of prophecy in the Avicennian texts, but he also detects allusions to the metaphysical principles which he believes govern this phenomenon: (a) superior things always communicate themselves to inferior things, which receive this flow according to their capacity (LW III, 217, 7–15; 218, 13–219, 1); (b) in the hierarchical structure of reality the highest of inferior things is always contiguous with the lowest of superior things (LW III, 220, 7–8); and (c) God is the first cause of the prophetic flow (LW III, 218, 1–4). Avicenna shows up again as one of the authorities who provide examples of natural divination, which Eckhart considers to be based on the same dynamics of the metaphysical flow as prophecy supernaturally inspired by God (LW III, 227, 6–11).²¹

4. In the field of philosophical theology, Eckhart draws from the Avicenna quotations several features of God which he himself highlights while discussing God's properties and names: besides necessity, His simplicity and unity (LW II, 451, 7–9), indefinability (LW II, 107, 9–10; 614, 6–10; 619, 9–620, 2), identity of *quidditas* and *anitas* (LW II, 21, 4–6), uniqueness (LW II, 124, 7–8; DW I, 216, 2–4), and indivisibility (LW II, 620, 4–7).

The way Eckhart approaches Avicenna on the issue of creation is complex and deserves special consideration: on the one hand, Eckhart does not hesitate to repeatedly criticize the necessary emanationism of Avicenna (these criticisms are extremely relevant insofar as they are the only explicit ones that Eckhart levels at Avicenna); yet on the other hand, Eckhart contradicts himself on one occasion by characterizing Avicenna's

²⁰ On this point, see A. Palazzo, "Ez sprichet gar ein hôher meister," 78–81.

²¹ On Avicenna's influence on Eckhart's views on prophecy, see A. Palazzo, "Ez sprichet gar ein hôher meister," 81–87. Some further quotations of Avicenna texts on prophetic issues are to be found in Eckhardus, *Expositio s. Evangelii secundum Iohannem* n. 268, LW III, 224, 3–4; n. 639, LW III, 555, 13–556, 2; *VAb*, DW V, 410, 7–411, 3.

as a good doctrine²² and, what is even more significant, his critical attitude does not prevent him from saving some important Avicennian elements which he utilizes in his explanation of creation.

In particular, Eckhart's critique identifies two serious shortcomings in the Avicennian account of how God, the Necessary Existent, brings about other entities: the function of mediation ascribed to the separated intelligences and the necessary character of emanation. As for the former point, Eckhart denies any cooperation of the first intelligence in creation, which is an act belonging to God alone, and maintains that all creatures—intelligences as well—receive their being from God immediately and alike.²³ As for the latter aspect, it must be observed that one of the exegeses Eckhart offers of the phrase "in principio," with which the Bible begins (Gen. 1:1: "In principio creavit Deus caelum et terram"), is "in the intellect," to the effect that creation is said to take place in God's intellect. Therefore, since God is a voluntary and intellectual agent, as Aquinas (*Summa theol.* 1, 47 a.1) also confirms, creation is, to Eckhart's mind, an intellectual operation that does not come about out of natural necessity ("ex necessitate naturae").²⁴

²² Eckhart, *Pr.* 18, *DW* I, 300, 3–301: "Ez sprichet gar ein hôher meister, daz der oberste engel der geiste sô nâhe sî dem êrsten ûzbruche und sô vil in im habe götlicher glichnisse und götlicher maht, daz er habe geschaffen alle dise werlt und dar zuo alle die engel, die under im sint. *Hie liget quotiu lère ane*, daz got sô hôch ist und sô lûter und sô einvaltic, daz er wûrket in sîner obersten crêatûre, daz diu wûrket in sînem gewalte, als ein truhsæze wûrket in des kûniges maht und berihet sîn lant." [My italics]. B. Hasebrink, "Grenzverschiebung. Zu Kongruenz und Differenz," 389–91, has drawn attention to Eckhart's positive statement concerning Avicenna's teaching: as two manuscripts adding the comment "Des enist nyt" before it indicate, the statement may have bewildered medieval readers. According to N. Largier, "Stellenkommentar," Meister Eckhart, *Werke I, Texte und Übersetzungen von J. Quint*, Bibliothek des Mittelalters 20 (Frankfurt am Main: 1993), 918, Eckhart's statement does not reveal any contradiction, but serves to point out a positive aspect in the Avicennian teaching, namely, its emphasis on God's absolute unity. Whatever the explanation of these words may be, they confirm the complexity of Eckhart's attitude towards Avicenna's explanation of the production of all things.

²³ Eckhart, *In Gen.* I n. 21, *LW* I, 1, 202, 3–5: "Et hoc contra opinionem Avicennae et aliorum dicentium quod deus creavit in principio intelligentiam et illa mediante creavit alia. Omnia enim habent esse immediate a solo deo et ex aequo;" *Pr.* 8, *DW* I, 130, 9–131, 4: "Ein meister sprichet, daz etliche crêatûren sô nâhe gote sint und hânt sô vil gedrûcket in sich götliches liehtes, daz sie andern crêatûren wesen gebent. Daz enist niht wâr, wan wesen ist sô hôch und sô lûter und gote sô sippe, daz nieman wesen geben enmac wan got alleine in im selber. Gotes eigenschaft ist wesen."

²⁴ Eckhart, *In Gen.* I n. 6, *LW* I, 189, 7–15; n. 10, *LW* I, 194, 1–7. Besides Aquinas, Eckhart also refers to Maimonides's critique of Avicenna's teaching: see Moses Maimonides, *Dux neutrorum*, ed. A. Justinianus, Paris, 1520, (facsimile reprint Frankfurt am Main: 1964), 2: 23, 53V–54r.

So far, only Eckhart's criticisms have been illustrated. Yet, as stated above, Eckhart's attitude towards Avicenna on the production of reality is by no means only negative. Eckhart retains, for example, the axiom "ex uno non fit nisi unum," which is the distinctive mark of Avicenna's emanatic doctrine, the principle underlying the gradual procession of the multitude from the One.²⁵ Obviously, in Eckhart's writings, this axiom undergoes a process of radical reinterpretation which rids it of the necessitarian implications in Avicenna's teaching and makes it fitting for a Christian context: according to Eckhart, the one which descends immediately from the simple One, namely God, is not, as Avicenna claims, the first intelligence, but the entire universe, which is a unity-in-multiplicity, one whole containing a multitude of parts ("unum quidem in multis partibus").²⁶

Apart from the reinterpretation of the "ex uno unum" axiom, Eckhart's views on creation owe much to Avicenna. One of the definitions of creation Eckhart provides ("collatio esse") is indeed a tacit rewording of a definition present in Avicenna's *Metaphysics*.²⁷ Another Avicenna text is quoted by Eckhart with regard to the creative power of the divine Word, for God, unlike a human craftsman, produces or makes something by

²⁵ Cf. Avicenna, *Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina V-X*, ed. S. Van Riet, 9, 4, 481, 50–51: "nosti etiam quod ex uno, secundum quod est unum, non est nisi unum." For the history of this principle in the Muslim and Jewish traditions, see A. Hyman, "From What is One and Simple Only What is One and Simple Can Come to Be," in *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, ed. L.E. Goodman, Studies in Neoplatonism: Ancient and Modern 7 (Albany: 1992), 111–35.

²⁶ Eckhart, *In Gen. I* n. 12, LW I, 195, 10–196, 2: "Tertio et melius dico quod re vera ab uno uniformiter se habente semper unum procedit immediate. Sed hoc unum est ipsum totum universum, quod a deo procedit, unum quidem in multis partibus universi, sicut deus ipse produciens est unus sive unum simplex in esse, vivere et intelligere et operari, copiosius tamen secundum rationes ideales;" *Expositio libri Sapientiae* n. 36, LW II, 356, 9–357, 3: "Sunt enim qui putant, ut Avicenna et sui sequaces, quod a primo sit primo et immediate creata intelligentia et ab illa deinceps alia. Dicendum est enim quod totum universum tamquam unum totum, sicut ipsum nomen indicat, quod dicitur universum tamquam unum, est ab uno simplici, unum ab uno, primo et immediate. Apte quidem; nam sicut deus est unum quid simplex per omnia in esse, multiplex tamen ratione, sic et ipsum universum unum quidem est—unus est enim mundus—multiplex tamen in partibus et rebus distinctis." For Eckhart's reinterpretation of this axiom, see W. Goris, "Mediante universo: A solution to the problem of the procession of a multitude from the One," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 6 (1997), 203–12, esp. 206–12; Goris, *Einheit als Prinzip & Ziel. Versuch über die Einheitsmetaphysik des Opus tripartitum Meister Eckharts*, (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters) 59 (Leiden/New York, Köln: 1997), 314–22.

²⁷ See, e.g. Eckhardus, *Prologus generalis in Opus Tripartitum* n. 15, LW I, 160, 7–8: "creatio est collatio esse, nec oportet addere 'ex nihilo,' quia ante esse est nihil;" Eckhardus, *In Sap.* n. 19, LW II, 340, 10–11: "Creatio enim est collatio esse post non esse." Avicenna, *Liber de philosophia prima*, ed. S. Van Riet, 6, 2, 304, 68–69: "haec est intentio quae apud sapientes vocatur creatio, quod est dare rei esse post non esse absolute."

saying it or thinking it.²⁸ As will become clear in the next section, it is the relationship between the two modes of God's causality (*bullitio* and *ebullitio*), which provides the most striking instance of Avicenna's influence on Eckhart in relation to the doctrine of creation.²⁹

1.4 *Bullitio and Ebullitio: The Two Forms of God's Causality*

In the Latin Sermon XLIX, as in several other places throughout his works, Eckhart discusses the two forms of divine causality, named respectively as boiling (*bullitio*) and boiling over (*ebullitio*), and their relationship.³⁰ The metaphor of *bullitio*, which is the process whereby a thing swells up and boils from and in itself without boiling over, is applied by Eckhart to the inner activity of God, Who produces from, out of, and within Himself a naked nature which is His Image, which is the Son equal to Him. *Bullitio*, in other words, designates the formal emanation of the divine persons in the Trinity, an emanation that excludes any kind of efficient or final

²⁸ Eckhart, *Liber parabolarum Genesis* n. 47, LW I, 1, 514, 10–515, 4: “Exemplum Avicennae est in domificatore, cuius dicere sive concipere practice domum non est producere domum ex imperfectione, qua partes domus et materia sunt extra artificem et habent esse ab alio. Deus autem, utpote prima causa et omnium—extra ipsum nihil est, ‘et sine ipso factum est nihil’—in ipso necessario dicere sive concipere quippiam est illud producere sive facere.” See also Eckhart, *Pr.* 47, DW II, 397, 2–5. The idea is expressed in Avicenna, *Liber de anima*, ed. S. Van Riet, V 1, 77, 14–19.

²⁹ It is highly likely, though not supported by explicit *meister* quotations, that Eckhart's very controversial teaching on the nothingness of creatures is also dependent on Avicenna's view that all the entities brought to existence by the Necessary Existent are in themselves false: see, e.g. Avicenna, *Liber de philosophia prima*, ed. S. Van Riet, 8, 6, 413, 88–91: “ceterarum vero rerum quidditates, sicut nosti, non merentur esse, sed prout sunt in seipsis, non considerata relatione earum ad necesse esse, merentur privationem; et ob hoc sunt omnes, prout in seipsis, falsae.” A. de Libera, *Métaphysique et noétique. Albert le Grand* (Paris: 2005), 96–99, puts forward such a doctrinal dependence and claims that Eckhart's teaching is reminiscent of some texts of Albert the Great and Ulrich of Strasbourg.

³⁰ For an overall analysis of the sermon see D.F. Duclow, “‘Whose Image Is This?’ in Eckhart's *Sermones*,” *Mystics Quarterly* 15 (1989), 29–40 and B. McGinn, “Sermo XLIX ‘Cuius est imago haec est superscriptio,’” in *Lectura Eckhardi III. Predigten Meister Eckharts von Fachgelehrten gelesen und gedeutet*, ed. G. Steer and L. Sturlese (Stuttgart: 2008), 209–37. Vladimir Lossky was the first to insist on *bullitio* and *ebullitio*, issues which he took up in several passages in his *Théologie négative et connaissance de Dieu chez Maître Eckhart* (Paris: 1960). On these two processes, see also W. Beierwaltes, “Deus est esse—esse est Deus. Die onto-theologische Grundfrage als aristotelisch-neuplatonische Denkstruktur,” in Beierwaltes, *Platonismus und Idealismus*, (Philosophische Abhandlungen) 40 (Frankfurt am Main: 2004), 47–64 (second revised and enlarged edition of that which appeared in 1972); P.L. Reynolds, “*Bullitio* and the God beyond God: Meister Eckhart's Trinitarian Theology. Part I: The Inner Life of God,” *New Blackfriars* 70 (1989), 169–81; B. McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart. The Man from Whom God Hid Nothing* (New York: 2001), 71–113.

causality and cooperation of will.³¹ *Ebullitio*, however, describes the outward causality of God, Who brings forth something from Himself, but not out of Himself, according to the modalities of efficient and final cause. This boiling over is either the making of something from another thing (*factio*), or the production of something out of nothing (*creatio*).³²

Having described the three modes of bringing into existence (*bullitio* and the two kinds of *ebullitio*—*factio* and *creatio*), Eckhart refers to Augustine's *De natura boni*, chapters 25 and 26, and to Avicenna's *Metaphysics* Book 8, towards the beginning of Chapter 6, as the two *auctoritates* on this matter.³³ Augustine's text is invoked as a warrant for the orthodox Christian teaching on creation. In particular, two aspects of the creationist standard view emerge from chapters 25 and 26 of the *De natura boni*: first, Augustine insists that God creates everything out of a real nothing ("nihil"), and not out of something which preexists, and in so doing Augustine makes clear what the difference between creating and a simple making (*factio*) is; secondly, he remarks that God accomplishes the work of creation by a word and a command ("in verbo atque imperio"), confirming in this way that the divine will is a factor in creation, or, in other words, that God acts as an efficient cause.³⁴

It is more difficult to understand Eckhart's mention of Book 8 of Avicenna's *Metaphysics*. In the footnote to this citation, the editors of LW IV claim that Eckhart is referring to those passages of *Metaphysics* 8 Chapter 6 where Avicenna analyzes the noetic dimension of the Necessary Existent. Being completely separate from matter, the Necessary Existent is pure intellect and, since it is matter and its attachments that prevent something from being apprehended intellectually, He is also an intelligible in itself. Furthermore, the Necessary Existent is an intellect that apprehends Itself intellectually. Therefore, the Necessary Existent is at the same time intellect, intellectual apprehender, and an intelligible apprehended; yet in it these are not multiple things.³⁵ According to the editors of LW IV, the

³¹ See Eckhart, *Sermo XLIX*, n. 511, LW IV, 425, 14–426, 9.

³² See Eckhart, *Sermo XLIX* n. 511, LW IV, 426, 9–12.

³³ See Eckhart, *Sermo XLIX* n. 511, LW IV, 426, 12–13.

³⁴ See Augustinus, *De natura boni*, ed. J. Zycha, Pragae, CSEL 25, 2 (Vindobonae, Lipsiae: 1892), 25–26, 866, 20–868, 6.

³⁵ Avicenna, *Liber de philosophia prima*, ed. S. Van Riet, 8, 6, 414, 5–14: "quod igitur liberum est a materia et ab eius appendiciis, quod certificatum est habere esse separatum, id est intellectum per se. Sed, quia est intelligentia per se et est etiam intellectum per se, tunc etiam est intellectum a se; igitur ipse est intelligentia apprehensionis et intelligens apprehensor et intellectum apprehensum. Non quod ibi sint res multae: ipse enim, inquantum est identitas spoliata, est intelligentia et, inquantum consideratur ipse quod

content of these lines of Avicenna's *Metaphysics* shows a certain analogy with the formal procession in the Trinity. To their mind, therefore, Eckhart would have seen in Avicenna's analysis of the noetic characters of the Necessary Existent an intuition of the *bullitio* process whereby the Son, the Image, derives formally from the Father so as to remain one and the same as Him. Avicenna, therefore, would have been cited not with regard to the *ebullitio* process, as Augustine was, but as a remarkable philosophical testimony to the inner life of God (i.e. to *bullitio*).³⁶

In another Avicenna quotation at the end of the sermon, Eckhart focuses on the relationship between *bullitio* and *ebullitio* and describes the former as the source for the latter: something needs, he says, to boil first in all of itself and eventually to boil over, so that it can be perfect ("perfectum") in all of itself, overflowing ("exuberans"), and above perfection ("plus quam perfectum"), just as in nature something first feeds, grows, becomes perfect, and then produces on the outside something similar to itself.³⁷

We know for sure that in this case Eckhart is referring to the first paragraph of *Metaphysics* VIII 6 on account of a few literal borrowings: "perfect," "overflowing," and "above perfection." There Avicenna maintains that the Necessary Existent is perfect in existence because He does not lack anything of His existence nor any of the perfections of His existence; unlike in other realities, in the Necessary Existent nothing of the genus of His existence is outside of His existence in something else. Even more, the Necessary Existent is above perfection not only because His existence is His, but also because everything else's existence flows forth from His existence.³⁸

sua identitas spoliata est sibi ipsi, est intellectum a seipso et, inquantum consideratur ipse quod ipse est sibi identitas spoliata, est apprehensor intelligens seipsum."

³⁶ See footnote 8 in Eckhart, *Sermo XLIX* n. 511, LW IV, 426, 14. Even though the editors' explanation is plausible, the Avicenna quotation could also be, like the one occurring at the end of the Sermon XLIX (see following footnote), a reference to the first paragraph of *Metaphysics* 8, Chapter 6. In this case, Avicenna would have been cited with respect not to *bullitio* in itself but to the relationship of *bullitio* and *ebullitio*.

³⁷ Eckhart, *Sermo XLIX*, n. 512, LW IV, 428, 1–4: "Oportet enim prius se toto bullire quidpiam et sic tandem ebullire, ut sit in se toto perfectum, exuberans plus quam perfectum. Vide Avicennam, VIII Metaphysicae c.6 in principio. Sic et natura prius nutrit, augmentat, perficit et sic extra producit simile."

³⁸ Avicenna, *Liber de philosophia prima*, ed. S. Van Riet, 8, 6, 412, 55–61: "Necesse esse est perfectum esse. Nam nihil deest sibi de suo esse et de perfectionibus sui esse, nec aliquid generis sui esse egreditur ab esse eius ad aliud a se... Sed necesse esse est plus quam perfectum, quia ipsum esse quod est ei non est ei tantum, immo etiam omne esse est exuberans ab eius esse et est eius et fluit ab illo."

This Avicenna text and Eckhart's references to it are of great importance from both a historical and conceptual point of view.³⁹ From the former, it must be pointed out that even though Avicenna does not explicitly speak of *ebullitio*, the beginning of *Metaphysics* 8, Chapter 6 does indicate the ultimate cause of *ebullitio*:⁴⁰ it is on account of His overabundance, of His being above perfection, that the Necessary Existent overflows, giving rise to all creatures. Eckhart, therefore, is right in citing this Avicennian text with regard to *ebullitio*. Moreover, Eckhart's recourse to Avicenna on this matter is paralleled by a statement of Dietrich of Freiberg, who in his *De intellectu et intelligibili*, while speaking of the *ebullitio* of the separate substances, refers to both Proclus and Avicenna as the two chief *auctoritates* on this issue.⁴¹ Dietrich also goes so far as to put Avicenna on the same level as the foremost philosophers (Aristotle, Plato, Proclus, and the *Book of the Causes*) who analyzed the flow of beings from the First Cause because of the clear treatment of this issue to be found in his *Metaphysics*.⁴² In light of both Eckhart's quoting Avicenna's *Metaphysics* 8 Chapter 6 and of Dietrich's statements it becomes clear that the metaphysics of Avicenna, beside that of Proclus, played a fundamental, but often disregarded, role in the elaboration of the *ebullitio* concept, which was crucial not only to Eckhart and Dietrich, but to the whole tradition of the so-called German Dominican school.⁴³

³⁹ As we have seen, Eckhart also cites this Avicennian passage in the *Commentary on the Gospel of John* while discussing the issue of the flow of the prophetic inspiration from God: see Eckhart, *In Ioh.* n. 263, LW III, 218, 1–4.

⁴⁰ At the beginning of *Metaphysics* 8, Chapter 6, however, there appears the word *exuberantia*, which is a synonym for *ebullitio*.

⁴¹ Theodoricus de Vriberg, *De intellectu et intelligibili*, ed. B. Mojsisch, CPTMA 2, 1 (Hamburg: 1977), 1, 8 (2), 142, 63–66: “Et in hoc consistit quaedam *ebullitio* talis substantiae in aliud extra in causando, sicut supra inductum est de Proclo et Avicenna dicit in sua *Metaphysica* de principiis separatis, scilicet quod intelligendo causant ea, quae sunt post. Quare talis eorum intelligentia non est passio nec passiva, sed vere actio et activa, et ita est *redundans* in aliquid aliud extra se” [My italics]. Dietrich seems to refer to *Metaphysics* Book 9 Chapter 4, where Avicenna describes the procession of separate intelligences, celestial souls, and celestial bodies from the First Cause through the mediation of the first intelligence: see Avicenna, *Liber de philosophia prima*, ed. S. Van Riet, 9, 4, 482, 76–488, 95.

⁴² Theodoricus de Vriberg, *De intellectu et intelligibili*, ed. B. Mojsisch, I, 11 (1), 144, 36–40: “hoc, quod tractaverunt philosophi de profluxu entium a prima causa, quod, quamvis haberi possit a primis et praecipuis philosophis, Aristotele videlicet et Platone et ex Proclo Platónico et ex Libro de causis, tamen manifeste habetur ab Avicenna in *Metaphysica* sua, cuius abbreviator fuit Algazel.”

⁴³ For the *ebullitio* concept in the representatives of the so-called German Dominican school, see M.R. Pagnoni-Sturlese, “À propos du Néoplatonisme d'Albert le Grand. Aventures et mésaventures de quelques textes d'Albert le Grand dans le Commentaire sur

From a conceptual point of view, it must be noted that the beginning of Avicenna's *Metaphysics* Book 8 Chapter 6 stands out among the several authorities which Eckhart quotes with regard to the two forms of God's causality, for this text does not merely present a philosophical intuition of the *ebullitio* process, but, as noted above, is a key to understanding how *ebullitio* is related to *bullitio*. Indeed, Eckhart seems to consider perfection, which in Avicenna's *Metaphysics* 8 Chapter 6 is presented as the ontological character of the Necessary Existent and which is the source for His overflowing (namely *ebullitio*), to be a consequence of a process of inner boiling.

2. AVICEBRON

"Même si les citations du *Fons vitae* par Eckhart demeurent peu nombreuses et très limitées, l'importance d'Avicébron parmi les sources du Maître n'est pas insignifiante... il est possible... de retrouver une large part de la doctrine eckhartienne au travers des allusions du Maître à la *Source de vie*."⁴⁴ These are the words with which Fernand Brunner characterizes the Avicebron–Eckhart relationship. Brunner's study has several merits: first, on the basis of thorough textual analyses, it shows that the contents of the Avicebron texts quoted by Eckhart are close to some of the most typical motifs of the Dominican Eckhart (the nothingness of creatures, the soul's breaking-through into God, God's having no "why," God's "necessary" becoming present to the detached soul which is ready to receive Him);⁴⁵ second, it identifies the "meister" referred to in two anonymous German quotations as Avicebron;⁴⁶ and third it points out that Eckhart shares with Avicebron the Neoplatonic emphasis on the existential and unitive dimension of theoretical knowledge—as is clear from the two aforementioned *meister* quotations, according to both thinkers spiritual realities are objects not merely of cognition but also of interior experience.⁴⁷

In what follows I intend to supplement Brunner's analyses by reflecting on the numerical data of the Avicebron quotations (number, distribution,

Proclus de Berthold de Moosburg," *Archives de Philosophie* 42 (1980), 635–54; A. de Libera, *La mystique rhénane d'Albert le Grand à Maître Eckhart* (Paris: 1994), 196–99, 348–73.

⁴⁴ F. Brunner, "Maître Eckhart et Avicébron," 150–51.

⁴⁵ F. Brunner, "Maître Eckhart et Avicébron," 151.

⁴⁶ F. Brunner, "Maître Eckhart et Avicébron," 133–36.

⁴⁷ F. Brunner, "Maître Eckhart et Avicébron," 136–39, 151.

literality, etc.), by pointing out their similarities with the Avicenna quotations, and by looking at two quotations that escaped Brunner's notice.

2.1 *Avicebron Quotations: Statistical Data*

In total, Eckhart quotes the *Fons vitae*, explicitly or behind the form of *meister* quotations, 14 times. Twelve of these quotes are found in the Latin writings: LW I/1, 580, 2–6 (FV I 3/5, 13–16.22); LW II, 225, 5–12 (FV I 4–5/6, 16–7, 3); LW III, 484, 1–2 (FV II 9/40, 19–41.11; II 10/41, 11–25; III 4/83, 1.4–6); LW III, 396, 10–397, 3 (FV III 14/108, 19–20.22–109, 1); LW III, 218, 5–11 (FV III 14/108, 19–20.24–109, 3); LW III, 399, 9–10 (FV III 14/108, 25–26); LW II, 238, 9–12 (FV V 22/298, 18–21); LW II, 64, 13 (FV V 23/300, 16–17); LW III, 332, 11 (FV V 23/300, 16–17); LW I/1, 684, 6–685, 4 (FV V 24/301, 16–302, 7.9–15); LW I/1, 205, 8–15 (FV V 24/302, 9–10.301, 20–302, 1.10–14); LW II, 218, 13–219, 2 (FV V 43/338, 22–27).⁴⁸ All of these quotations name Avicebron or mention the title of his work (the *Fons vitae*).

Two quotations occur in the German writings: DW III, 302, 3–14 (FV III 56–57/203, 7.204, 10–205, 10.14–18) and DW II, 612, 3–10 (FV III 56–57/204, 10–13.15.23–24.205, 8–13). Like most of the Avicenna quotations contained in the German writings, they are *meister* quotations—Eckhart alludes to a dialogue between a master and his disciple—and are not verbatim, though they present some literal elements which are revealing and point to the Latin original text.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ I refer, first, to the quotation in Eckhart's writings, then, in parentheses, to the original text in the *Fons vitae* (= FV), of which I give book (in Roman numerals) and chapter numbers and, after a slash, page and line numbers according to the edition: Avencebrol (Ibn Gebirol), *Fons vitae*, ed. C. Baeumker, BGPTM 1, 2–4 (Münster: 1995), (facsimile reprint of the 1895 first edition). Two quotations have remained neglected in Brunner's study: LW II, 218, 13–219, 2 and LW II, 225, 5–12. B. McGinn, "Sapientia Judaeorum," 226, n. 69, draws attention to the latter, but does not analyze it; the quotations are briefly examined in M. Benedetto, "Saggio introduttivo," in Avicebron, *Fonte della vita*, ed. M. Benedetto (Milan: 2007), 190. As for Eckhart's implicit references to Avicebron, the most convincing ones among those suggested by the editors of Eckhart's *Opera omnia* are LW I/1, 196, 4–5 and LW II, 64, 6–7.

⁴⁹ From the synoptical arrangement made by Brunner (133–36) of both these quotations and of the original passages in the *Fons vitae* the following correspondences emerge: "faciet tibi cognitionem ordinis substantiarum spiritualium" = "es geistlichiu dinc bekente;" "et vidi totum mundum corporalem natantem in illis, sicut navicula in mari et avicula in aëre" = "ich . . . bekenne, daz alliu liplichiu dinc sint als ein klein schif, daz dâ swebet in dem mer, und als ein vogel, der dâ vliuget in dem lufte;" "ordenunge der engel" = "ordinis substantiarum intelligibilium;" "et aliquando putabis quod sis omnes illae (scil. substantiae spirituales)" = "sô wirt dich bedünken, wie dû alle engel mit allen engeln sist;" "mirabilium omni mirabili" = "wunder über wunder."

As in the case of the Avicenna quotations, the 12 explicit quotations are scattered evenly throughout the Latin works, with a greater concentration (5) in the *Commentary on the Gospel of John*.

Eckhart's writings	Number of quotations
<i>Expositio s. Evangelii secundum Iohannem</i>	5
<i>Expositio Libri Exodi</i>	3
<i>Liber parabolarum Genesis</i>	2
<i>Expositio Libri Genesis</i>	1
<i>Sermones et lectiones super Ecclesiastici</i>	1

With the exception of a quote (LW III, 484, 1–2) that condenses the teaching of three different passages of the *Fons vitae* (Book II chapters 9–10 and Book III Chapter 4),⁵⁰ the Latin quotations are all literal. This fact, the length of some of them, and the precise identification of the passages in the *Fons vitae* (with indication of the book and sometimes of the chapter from which the quotations are taken) suggest that Eckhart read Avicbron's work firsthand.⁵¹

2.2 Eckhart's Approach to the Fons Vitae

In light of the fact that Eckhart cites only a few selected passages,⁵² whose contents are even doctrinally uncharacteristic of the *Fons vitae*, Brunner has raised the question as to whether he had access to the Gabirolian work as a whole or used only *excerpta* from it.⁵³ In my opinion, Eckhart's selective quoting does not depend on the partial nature of the text he had at his disposal, but only reveals that his interest in the *Fons vitae* was restricted to some specific themes, as was also the case with other sources.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ According to F. Brunner, "Maitre Eckhart et Avicébron," 149, the quotation is likely taken from Aquinas's *Summa* (1 pars, quaest. 115 art.1), to which Eckhart refers immediately after citing Avicbron; it must be noted, however, that Thomas does not allude there to precise sections of the *Fons vitae*, as Eckhart does.

⁵¹ Only the quotation LW III, 332, 11, lacks any indication, while LW II, 218, 13–219, 2 is erroneous, cited not as Book V, but as Book III of the *Fons vitae*.

⁵² Except for LW III, 484, 1–2, the Avicbron citations are taken by Eckhart from only five loci of the *Fons vitae*: the beginning of Book I, chapters 14 and 56–57 of Book III, and chapters 22–24 and 43 of Book V.

⁵³ F. Brunner, "Maitre Eckhart et Avicébron," 149.

⁵⁴ As stated above, Eckhart's quotations of Avicenna refer to some general fields and focus on some points of doctrine, but neglect other areas and themes in Avicenna's works

Indeed, Eckhart's approach towards Avicbron's work is quite different from that adopted by his two illustrious Dominican predecessors, Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas. Both Albert and Thomas embarked on a thorough discussion involving the most characteristic teachings of the *Fons vitae*, notably those most controversial and hotly debated during the course of its reception in the Latin West in the 13th and 14th centuries: universal hylomorphism, God's creative will, and the plurality of substantial forms. Albert's and Thomas's attitude is rather critical, but their criticisms are based on a serious attempt to properly understand the Gabirolian doctrines in their original metaphysical context and to grasp all of their implications.⁵⁵

Unlike his two brethren, Eckhart is not interested in the debate over these key Gabirolian doctrines, and his quotations of the *Fons vitae*, devoid of any reference to concepts such as *forma universalis*, *materia universalis*, and God's creative will, mirror his disinterest.⁵⁶ Moreover, Eckhart's overall hermeneutical strategy is instrumental, for he does not seem to be so much concerned with knowing what the mind of Avicbron was as with verifying whether something in the Gabirolian text can be utilized for the purposes of his own arguments; whether as a building block or as a proof-text of his own teachings, or of his exegeses of the Scripture. Obviously, at times, such a strategy results in the tendency to "force" the texts

which, by contrast, caught other scholastics' attention; the same, as we shall see, holds true for the Averroes quotations, which do not cover the whole range of issues in Averroes's writings that were usually discussed by the Latin schoolmen. The only difference with Avicbron lies in the fact that the Avicenna and Averroes quotations are more numerous and, thus, a wider variety of questions are considered by them.

⁵⁵ For Albert's attitude towards Avicbron, see A. Weisheipl, "Albertus Magnus and Universal Hylomorphism: Avicbron," in *Albert the Great Commemorative Essays*, ed. F.J. Kovach and R.W. Shahan (Norman: 1980), 239–60, esp. 252–60 and B. McGinn, "Ibn Gabirol: The Sage Among the Schoolmen," in *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, ed. L.E. Goodman, 96–98; for the Avicbron–Thomas relationship, see F. Brunner, *Platonisme et Aristotélisme. La critique d'Ibn Gabirol par Saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Louvain-Paris: 1965), 33–84. A syncretical up-to-date account of the reception of the *Fons vitae* in Latin scholastic literature is to be found in M. Benedetto, "Saggio introduttivo," 141–97.

⁵⁶ The only partial exception is the quotation LW III, 484, 1–2, which alludes to the Gabirolian teaching on the passivity of bodies. However, as stated above, the passage is likely to be an indirect quotation via Thomas Aquinas's *Summa* and, in addition, it does not reveal any real interest in this technical doctrine of Avicbron. Eckhart quotes the passage in the midst of his various spiritual exegeses of John 14:8 ("Domine, ostende nobis patrem, et sufficit nobis"), all of which are based on the interpretation of 'patrem' as "unum." Asserting that bodies, being material, are passive and devoid of any action, the quotation fits into Eckhart's negative characterization of matter, which is linked with multitude, evil, and nothingness, and therefore opposed to the One: see Eckhardus, *In Ioh.*, nn. 551–54, LW III, 481, 1–484, 3.

quoted by creatively transforming their original meaning and neglecting their original doctrinal context.

A very good example of Eckhart's attitude is provided by a quotation occurring in the first sermon on Ecclesiasticus.⁵⁷ While in the *Fons vitae* the passages quoted refer to the universal form, characterized by Avicbron as substance constituting the essence of all forms, as perfect wisdom, and as extremely pure light, Eckhart reinterprets them and applies them to the divine wisdom, which is alluded to by the biblical pericope Eckhart is interpreting ("Ego quasi vitis fructificavi suavitatem odoris," Sirach 24:23). In particular, the "ego" of the pericope refers, in Eckhart's mind, to the absolute purity of the substance, a feature which is proper to the divine wisdom. According to Brunner, the very combination of the notions of purity and wisdom in the passages of the *Fons vitae* would have led Eckhart to single out and apply them, in contrast with their original meaning, to God.⁵⁸

2.3 *The Themes of the Avicbron Quotations*

From what has been said so far, it emerges that the way in which Eckhart quotes Avicbron's text shares common features with his use of Avicenna's writings: firstly, in both cases, Eckhart only quotes a restricted selection of passages—very small in the case of the *Fons vitae*, much larger in the case of Avicenna's works—some of which he reports more than once; secondly, both the Avicbron and Avicenna quotations are distributed in a rather uniform manner in Eckhart's Latin writings, even though their number is higher in the *Commentary on the Gospel of John*; thirdly, the two Avicbron quotations in the German writings present the same formal features as the German Avicenna quotations (anonymous *meister* form and presence of few literal elements). However, the fourth and most relevant analogy lies in the fact that Eckhart quotes Avicbron and Avicenna with regard to the very same themes, as though these two authorities were, to his mind, interchangeable on some specific doctrinal points.

⁵⁷ Eckhart, *Sermo I super Ecclesiastici c. 24* n. 9, LW II, 238, 7–12: "Sub hac autem puritate substantiae significat li *ego*, et hoc est primum quod in amato requiritur, scilicet puritas sine omni permixtione, quae proprie sapientiae divinae congruit. Unde in V l. Fontis vitae auctor de deo excelso et sancto loquens dicit 'quod est substantia constituens essentiam omnium formarum,' 'sapientia perfecta, lumen purissimum.' Prov. 3: 'primi et purissimi fructus eius.'" The original text is Avencebrol, *Fons vitae* V 22, ed. C. Baeumker, BGPTM 1, 2–4 (Münster: 1895), 298, 18–21.

⁵⁸ F. Brunner, "Maitre Eckhart et Avicébron," 144.

In two instances Eckhart makes clear the doctrinal agreement between the two authorities by quoting them together in relation to the same question or in support of the same thesis. In the *Book of the Parables of Genesis* Eckhart combines the Avicenna passage which states that man's soul is bound to the body in order to attain intellectual perfection (see section 1.2) with a *Fons vitae* text which affirms that the perfection of the human soul, which is the end of the generation of the human species, consists in being brought from potential to actual knowledge, from ignorance to science: the actualization, Eckhart concludes, takes place thanks to the operations of the senses.⁵⁹ While addressing the prophetic flow from God in the *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Eckhart connects Avicenna's *Metaphysics* Book 8 Chapter 6 (which, as said, describes the Necessary Existent's ability to overflow and produce reality) with the *Fons vitae* text which argues that it befits form to communicate itself to matter, whenever the latter is apt to receive the former, and that in its process of self-communication form obeys the First Maker, Who is the originator of the universal flow of form.⁶⁰

In other instances, Avicenna and Avicenna are quoted separately rather than together on different occasions with respect to the same

⁵⁹ Eckhart, *In Gen. II*, n. 113, LW I/1, 580, 12–581, 6: “Et hoc Avicenna De anima p.I capitulo ultimo dicit: ‘obligatio corporis cum anima’ ‘est propter hoc, ut perficiatur intellectus contemplativus et sanctificetur et mundetur.’ Et Avicenna I.I c.2 ait: ‘perfectio animae est scientia ipsius, imperfectio autem ignorantia, et ipsa a principio sui’ ‘commutatur de ignorantia ad scientiam, et sic exit de potentia ad effectum.’ Ex quo ‘sequitur quod causa generationis hominis sit exire’ ex ignorantia ad scientiam animae. Hoc autem fit ministerio sensuum, sensitivi scilicet.” See Avencebrol, *Fons vitae* I 3, ed. C. Baeumker, 5, 13–16.

⁶⁰ Eckhart, *In Ioh.*, n. 263, LW III, 218, 1–12: “Adhuc tamen accipiendum quod idem Avicenna VIII Metaphysicae c. 6 ait: ‘necesse esse,’ deus scilicet, ‘est plus quam perfectum, quoniam ipsum esse, quod est ei, non est et tantum, immo etiam omne esse est exuberans ab eius esse et est et fluit ab ipso, et ipsum est pura bonitas.’ Iterum etiam Avicenna De fonte vitae I. III sic ait: ‘de natura formae est ut uniatur materiae, cum parata fuerit materia recipere eam.’ Et infra: ‘hoc est evidentius signum quod forma advenit a factore primo et est obtemperans illi, eo quod compellitur in natura sua ad dandum se et conferendum formam suam, cum invenit materiam receptibilem sui,’ et ‘fuit necesse, ut’ ‘haec actio esset penetrans per omne usque ad effectum receptibilem sui.’ Hucusque verba Avicenna.” See Avencebrol, *Fons vitae* III 14, ed. C. Baeumker, 108, 19–109, 3. Eckhart shows a certain predilection for this Avicenna text since he cites it another two times in the *Commentary on John* in a rather different context. There the text is adduced as supporting the view that natural operations are processes that mediate between an agent and a patient and make it possible for the form which is contained in the agent and which is the principle of the operation to be generated in the matter of the patient: Eckhardus, *In Ioh.*, nn. 463–64, LW III, 396, 9–397, 5. Furthermore, Avicenna text is quoted to make it clear that operation predisposes matter not only for form, but also for whatever is connected or proper to form: Eckhardus, *In Ioh.*, nn. 467, LW III, 399, 6–400, 2.

issues, namely the mode of existence peculiar to spiritual realities, the process of ascent to the *regio intellectualis*, and God's unity. Eckhart refers to both Avicbron and Avicenna when putting forward the view that spiritual substances escape the laws ruling the material-temporal beings: in the German Sermon 58 he argues for the illocal existence of *spiritualia* on the basis of the *Fons vitae* passage which asserts that the *spiritualia* "contain" corporeal realities, just as a small ship is encompassed by the sea and a bird by the air;⁶¹ in the Latin Sermon LV, he quotes a text from Avicenna's *Metaphysics* that clearly distinguishes the physical interaction of corporeal entities, which are separated by their respective superficies, from the substantial union of intellectual realities, such as the intellect and his intelligible objects.⁶²

In the German Sermon 75, a long Avicbron text is quoted by Eckhart with a view to portraying the process a man needs to undergo in order to become perfectly uplifted, which is one of the requirements for getting to the divine love—the Holy Spirit—through which God loves his only begotten Son and, in this way, experiencing the birth of the Son in one's soul. The uplifted man (*ûfklimmenden geist*) sinks deeply into himself and conjoins with the essence of the angelic hierarchies until he comes to a union with God, the Origin of everything.⁶³ In order to describe the very

⁶¹ Eckhart, *Pr.* 58, DW II, 612, 3–10: "Als ich ouch mê gesprochen hân, wie ein meister lêrte sînen jûnger, wie er dar zuo kême, daz er geistlichiu dinc bekennte. Dô sprach der jûnger: 'meister, nâch dîner lêre sô bin ich erhaben und bekenne, daz alliu lîplichiu dinc sint als ein klein schif, daz dâ swebet in dem mer, und als ein vogel, der dâ vliuget in dem luete.' Wan alliu geistlichiu dinc sint erhaben über diu lîplichen; ie sie mê erhaben sint, ie sie sich mê wîtent und besliezent diu lîplichen dinc. Dar umbe sint diu lîplichen dinc kleine wider diu geistlichen; und ie diu geistlichen dinc hœher sint, ie sie groezer sint; und ie kreftiger sie sint an den werken, ie lûterer sie sint an dem wesene." See Avencebrol, *Fons vitae* III 56–57, ed. C. Baeumker, 204, 10–13.15.23–24. 205, 8–13.

⁶² Eckhart, *Sermo LV*, n. 551, LW IV, 462, 1–4: "<Vel quae erit dispositio eius>, cuius applicatio est contingentia superficierum, comparatione eius, quod infunditur in substantia<m> sui receptibilis, ita quod sit ipsum idem sine discretionem, quoniam intelligentia et intelligens et intellectum sunt unum vel paene unum?" See Avicenna, *Liber de philosophia prima*, ed. S. Van Riet, IX 7, 511, 90–94.

⁶³ Eckhart, *Pr.* 75, DW III, 302, 3–303, 3: "Ez vrâgete ein jûnger sînen meister von der ordenunge der engel. Dô berihte er in und sprach: 'ganc hinwec und vûege dich in dich selben sô lange, daz dû ez verstandest, und gip dich danne mit wesenne dar in und luoge, daz dû in niht anders ensîst, wan daz dû an im vindest. Sô dînkst dich ze dem êrsten, wie dû die engel mit in sîst; und als dû dich in ir aller wesen gibest, sô wirt dich bedînken, wie dû alle engel mit allen engeln sîst.' Der jûnger gienc hinwec und vuogete sich in sich selben als lange, biz er dis alles bî der wârheit bevant. Dô gienc er wider ze dem meister und dankete im und sprach: 'mir ist geschehen, wie dû mir gesaget hâst. Dô ich mich gap in daz wesen der engel und ûfklam in ir wesene, dô dûhte mich ze jungeste, wie ich alle engel mit allen engeln wære.' Dô sprach der meister: 'eyâ, kumest dû ein wênic vûrbaz in

same process of man's assimilation to the intellectual superior realities, Eckhart often also cites the passage from Avicenna's *Metaphysics* which states that the rational soul's perfection lies in its transformation into an intellectual world (see section 1.3).⁶⁴

On two occasions, in the *Commentary on Exodus* and the *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Eckhart resorts to an Avicbron quotation according to which every difference falls under the One, as a key authority in the discussion of God's absolute unity and of the distinction affecting creatures.⁶⁵ That God is absolutely one and beyond any distinction is a view that Eckhart also sets forth by referring to the texts in which Avicenna advocates God's unity and simplicity.⁶⁶

Moreover, the notion of divine unity is put forward in another Avicbron text cited by Eckhart twice: in accordance with the Proclean hierarchical worldview, this quotation distinguishes four orders of reality (God, intelligence, soul, and nature), and links each of them with a particular

den ursprunc, sô sol wunder über wunder mit dîner sêle werden gewürket; wan die wîle der mensche ûfklimmende ist und enpfâhende ist mit mittel der créâtûren, sô enist er niht ze ruowe komen. Swenne er aber ûfklimmende ist in got, dâ enpfâhet er in dem sune mit dem sune von dem vater allez, daz got geleisten mac." The original text is Avencebrol, *Fons vitae* III 56–57, ed. C. Baeumker, 203, 7 and 204, 13–205, 9.14–18.

⁶⁴ By relating both Avicenna and Avicbron to the issue of man's assimilation to the *regio intellectualis*, Eckhart discerns a real affinity between the two authorities: indeed, a *Fons vitae* text, which was, however, not cited by Eckhart, provides clear evidence of this affinity by depicting the soul's intellectual perfection in a way that is most reminiscent of Avicennian ideas and terminology: Avencebrol, *Fons vitae* V 43, ed. C. Baeumker, 337, 20–22: "quando hoc feceris, extenuabitur anima tua et clarificabitur intellectus tuus, et penetrabit usque in saeculum intelligentiae" [My italics].

⁶⁵ Eckhart, *Expositio libri Exodi*, n. 58, *LW* II, 64, 11–65, 4: "Super omnia vero et extra numerum nihil est praeter unum. In uno autem nulla prorsus cadit nec cadere potest differentia, sed omnis 'differentia sub uno' est, ut dicitur De fonte vitae l. V. 'Hoc enim vere unum est, in quo nullus numerus est,' ut ait Boethius. Et Rabbi Moyses, ut supra dictum est, dicit quod deus est unus 'omnibus modis et secundum omnem rationem,' ita ut in ipso non sit invenire aliquam 'multitudinem in intellectu vel extra intellectum,' l. I c. 50;" *In Ioh.*, n. 389, *LW* III, 332, 11. The original text is to be found in Avencebrol, *Fons vitae* V 23, ed. C. Baeumker, 300, 16–17; see also Avencebrol, *Fons vitae* II 20, ed. C. Baeumker, 61, 2–12. Avicbron's relevance to Eckhart's teaching on God's unity has been rightly emphasized by B. McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart*, 173.

⁶⁶ Eckhart, *In Sap.*, n. 114, *LW* II, 451, 6–9: "Hinc est enim quod deus, cum sit eodem 'deus et hic deus,' utpote simplex, convincitur esse unus deus, sicut probat Avicenna I *Metaphysicae* capitulo paenultimo et VIII *Metaphysicae* suae c. 5;" see Avicenna, *Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina I–IV*, ed. S. Van Riet (Leiden: 1977), I 7, 49, 39–55, 55 and Avicenna, *Liber de philosophia prima*, ed. S. Van Riet, VIII 5, 405, 7–406, 23. On the issue of God's absolute unity, however, Maimonides also plays a crucial role (see previous note).

question and a given number—the question fitting God, Who is one, whether He is (*an est*).⁶⁷

In his essay on Avicbron as a source for Eckhart, Brunner misses two quotations, both occurring in Eckhart's discussion of Ex. 33 in the *Commentary on Exodus*, where the issue of the *visio* of God's essence is at stake. In the first text, which is at the end of the *Fons vitae*, Avicbron alludes to the operations which enable man to attain the most perfect kind of knowledge, namely that of the world of the divinity ("scientia de saeculo deitatis, quod est totum maximum"), knowledge which guarantees the evasion of death and the union with the origin of life: withdrawing from sensible things, penetrating with the mind intelligible realities, and giving oneself up totally to God, the Giver of goodness.⁶⁸ This text, which is reported by Eckhart while commenting on Ex. 33:13 ("ostende

⁶⁷ Eckhart, *In Gen. I*, n. 27, LW I/1, 205, 8–14: "Rursus: omne quod cadit ab uno, primo omnium, cadit in duo immediate; in alios autem numeros cadit mediante dualitate. Unde Avicbron l. V c. 24 dicit quod 'quaestio "an est" posita est secundum ordinem unius, quia esse est tantum,' et competit sola deo soli, qui est 'unus, excelsus et sanctus.' Et 'infra hunc' intelligentiae, quae prima est infra deum, competit quaestio 'an est' et "quid," instar duorum.' Animae vero debetur quaestio 'an est,' 'quid est' et "quale est," ad instar trium.' Naturae vero sive generationi, quae infra animam est, debetur quaestio 'an est,' 'quid est,' et "quale est" et "quare est," ad instar quattuor, et refertur ad "quid est," ad "quale est" et ad "an est."'" For Eckhart's teaching on the *casus ab uno* see W. Goris, *Einheit als Prinzip & Ziel*, 114–23. Eckhart, *In Gen. II*, n. 209, LW I/1, 684, 1–685, 4: "Huic autem quod dictum est, per quattuor angelos et gradus scalae quattuor significari totum universum distinguere in quattuor partes principales, concordat quod Proclus ait propositione vicesima: 'omnibus corporibus superior est animae substantia, et omnibus animabus superior est intellectualis natura, et omnibus intellectualibus hypostasibus superius unum.' Adhuc autem et illud quod Avicbron De fonte vitae l. V c. 24 sic ait: 'dico quod esse ab extremo supremo usque ad extremum infimum distinctum est quattuor ordinibus, scilicet "an est," "quid est," "quale est," "quare est." Harum autem dignissima illa de qua quaestio "an est" tantum, non "quid est," non "quale est," non "quare est," sicut unus, excelsus et sanctus. Et infra hunc est id de quo quaeritur "quid est," non "quale est" nec "quare est," sicut intelligentia. Infra autem hanc est id de quo quaeritur "quid est" et "quale est," sicut anima. Infra hanc autem est id de quo quaeritur "quid est" et "quale est" et "quare est," sicut natura et generata ex ea. Et unumquodque istorum ordinatum est secundum ordinem numeri,' 'quia quaestio "an est" posita est secundum ordinem unius, quia est esse tantum. Et "quid est" habet instar duorum, quia constat ex duobus, scilicet ex genere et differentia. Et "quale est" est ad instar trium, quia sustinetur in habente "quid est" et refertur ad illud. Et "quare est," ad instar quattuor, quia refertur ad "quale est" et ad "quid est" et ad "an est," quae sunt tres.'" See Avencebrol, *Fons vitae* V 24, ed. C. Baeumker, 301,16–302, 15. F. Brunner, "Maitre Eckhart et Avicbron," 140, claims that this Gabirolian quotation may be among the sources for Eckhart's concept of God as having no why.

⁶⁸ Eckhart, *In Exod.*, n. 271, LW II, 218, 13–219, 2: "In libro Fontis vitae sic scribitur: 'quod erit auxilium consequendi hanc speciem nobilem?' Et respondetur: 'sequestrari prius a sensibilibus et mente infundi intelligibilibus et suspendi totum ad datorem bonitatis. Cumque hoc feceris, respiciet te et largus erit tibi, sicut convenit illi,' l. III." See Avencebrol, *Fons vitae* V 43, ed. C. Baeumker, 338, 22–27.

mihi faciem tuam, ut sciam te”), confirms that the teaching on intellectual perfection is one of the main focuses of Eckhart’s reading of the *Fons vitae*. As far as the doctrinal content is concerned, the text agrees with the Gabirolian quotation in German Sermon 75: removing oneself from sensible objects (“sequestrari prius a sensibilibus”) corresponds with the invitation to delve into oneself (“vüege dich in dich selben”); the complete penetration of intelligible things (“mente infundi intelligibilibus”) has a counterpart in the identification with the superior spiritual substances (“Dô ich mich gap in daz wesen der engel und ûfklam in ir wesene, dô dûhte mich ze jungeste, wie ich alle engel mit allen engeln wære”); in both cases the process leading to intellectual perfection culminates in the attainment of the First Cause, namely with the *Dator of bonitatis* or *ursprunc*. As is clear from these two texts, Eckhart is inclined to emphasize in the Gabirolian source the existential dimension in the process of achieving intellectual perfection, a process which is not only merely speculative, for it implies a parallel conversion from outward to inward life and a progressive rise from multiplicity to unity.⁶⁹

Later on in the commentary on Ex. 33, Eckhart maintains that knowing God’s essence, which is the kind of vision alluded to by Ex. 33:13 (“ostende mihi faciem tuam”), is possible for human created intellect only if illuminated by the light of glory. Relying on Maimonides,⁷⁰ whose position he finds in agreement with what Christian authors say about man before the Fall, Eckhart makes clear that by nature only God’s works, but not His essence, can be known. Based on other Maimonides texts,⁷¹ he further adds that only God is able to apprehend His own quiddity, which, by contrast, remains unknown to Moses and, *a fortiori*, to whomever else.⁷² In the midst of this reasoning, Eckhart quotes the other Avicbron passage which sets out the metaphysical and epistemological reasons for man’s inability to see God’s essence “ex puris naturalibus.” Indeed, in the text Avicbron maintains that God’s essence can be perceived only indirectly

⁶⁹ Also the Avicennian notion of a transformation of the soul into an intelligible world has moral implications and presupposes a purification from emotions, as appears evident from another text from Avicenna’s *Metaphysics* cited by Eckhart: Eckhardus, *In Exod.*, n. 12, LW II, 17, 7–9: “Adhuc et est illud Avicennae IX Metaphysicae c. 7: ‘non sentimus’ nec ‘inquirimus nec allicimur’ ad secretiora et divina, ‘nisi prius deposuerimus a cervicibus nostris iugum voluptatis et irae et sorores earum;’” *In Ioh.*, n. 640, LW III, 556, 2–4. See Avicenna, *Liber de philosophia prima*, ed. S. Van Riet, IX 7, 512, 57–9.

⁷⁰ Moses Maimonides, *Dux neutrorum*, ed. A. Justinianus, I, 53, 20r 25–29, 43–46.

⁷¹ Moses Maimonides, *Dux neutrorum*, ed. A. Justinianus, I 58, 23r 8–9; I 53, 20r 29–30.

⁷² Eckhardus, *In Exod.*, n. 275, LW II, 222, 8–10; nn. 278–80, LW II, 223, 13–225, 3; n. 281, LW II, 225, 13–226, 6.

through His works, for God's essence is above everything, is infinite, and bears no similarity with intellect nor has anything in common with it.⁷³

The fact that the two passages quoted in the commentary on Ex. 33 are among the very few texts of the *Fons vitae* in which Avicbron alludes to the *scientia de essentia prima*, and that Eckhart places them in the different context provided by the then usual theological discussion on whether the *visio* of God's essence comes about by nature or requires the supernatural illumination of the light of glory, confirms Eckhart's selective and instrumental approach to the Gabirolian work. On the one hand, Eckhart overlooks the complex and highly structured metaphysical teaching contained in the *Fons vitae*; yet on the other hand, he derives from Avicbron's work, sometimes with hermeneutical boldness, or at least finds in it support for some of the most typical themes and motifs of his thought: the purity and unity of the divine substance, the concept of a four-tiered reality, the metaphysics of flow, the notion of *spiritualia* encompassing corporeal beings, the spiritual dimension of intellectual perfection, the return to the Origin of everything, the ways and the limits of human knowledge of the divine essence.

3. AVERROES

3.1 *Averroes Quotations: Statistical Data*

Eckhart cites Averroes by name or refers to him as *Commentator* 43 times: LW IV, 248, 1–2; LW IV, 388, 13–15; LW III, 20, 6–10; LW III, 397, 13–14; LW II, 468, 6–7; LW II, 526, 11–527,1; LW III, 614, 6–8; LW I/1, 617, 12–618, 1; LW I/1, 604, 5–7; LW III, 118, 1–2; LW IV, 457, 5; LW I/1, 262, 1–2; LW V, 82, 14–83, 2; LW II, 427, 10–428, 2; LW II, 468, 9–469, 1; LW III, 592, 9–11; LW III, 592, 11–12; LW I/1, 509, 11–510, 2; LW I/1, 187, 5–9; LW I/1, 529, 5–7;

⁷³ Eckhart, *In Exod.*, n. 281, LW II, 225, 5–12: "Avicbron De fonte vitae l. I c. 4 quaerit dicens: 'est via ad attingendum scientiam essentiae primae?' Et respondet quod 'hoc non est impossibile nec ex omni parte possibile.' 'Impossibile' autem est 'scire essentiam primae essentiae absque his factoris, quae ab ea' 'sunt; possibile autem est scire eam' 'ex suis operibus.' Et subdit quod scire essentiam primi, dei scilicet, est impossibile, tum 'quia ipsa est super omnia,' tum quia 'infinita,' tum quia 'non est similis' intellectui, tum quia se non contingunt 'nec habent convenientiam' essentia prima et intellectus." See Avencebrol, *Fons vitae* I 4–5, ed. C. Baeumker 6, 16–7, 3. A difference from the original Gabirolian passage must be pointed out in Eckhart's text: while Avicbron affirms that the first essence is not even similar to the intelligence, which, by contrast, is similar to and thus knowable by the human soul, Eckhart highlights the difference between the first essence and the human intellect, leaving out any reference to the intelligence.

LW III, 26, 4–6; LW III, 399, 12–13; LW I/1, 215, 12–14; LW I/1, 585, 9; LW I/1, 588, 6–8; LW I/1, 242, 3–4; LW I/1, 676, 5–6; LW III, 448, 4–5; LW III, 655, 6–7; LW I/1, 275, 11–276,1; LW I/1, 690, 6–8; DW II, 396, 2–3; LW I/1, 524, 10–11; LW III, 31, 11–12; LW III, 48, 9–10; LW III, 436, 5–6; LW V, 82, 14–83, 2; LW III, 443, 10–14; LW I/1, 192, 13–193, 1; LW IV, 327, 9–10; LW II, 112, 14–15; LW II, 631, 6–8; LW V, 337, 4–5. Even though in itself remarkable, this number cannot compare with the quantity of quotations of the most cited philosophical sources (Aristotle, Maimonides, Avicenna, and *De causis*).

The Averroes works quoted—whether directly or via intermediary sources, as discussed below—by Eckhart are five: the *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, the *Commentary on De anima*, the *Commentary on the Physics*, the *De substantia orbis*, and the *Commentary on De caelo*. The *Commentary on the Metaphysics* is by far the most cited (18 LW+1 DW), around twice as often as the *Commentary on De anima*, the second most cited work (9 LW). Taken together, the quotations from the writings in natural philosophy (*Commentary on the Physics*, *De substantia orbis*, and *Commentary on De caelo*) amount to a modest, though not insignificant, number (13).

The distribution of the Averroes quotations throughout Eckhart's writings is much less uniform than that of the Avicenna quotations. In particular, those which stand out among Eckhart's writings are the *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, with 14 quotations, and, for opposite reasons, the *Commentary on Exodus*, with only one quotation. In the middle are all the other major works: the *Book of Parables of Genesis* (9), the *Commentary on Genesis* (6), the *Commentary on the Book of Wisdom* (5), and the collection of Latin sermons (4).

Averroes's writings	LW	DW	Number of quotations
<i>Commentary on the Metaphysics</i>	16+(2)	(1)	16+(3)
<i>Commentary on De anima</i>	9	0	9
<i>Commentary on the Physics</i>	7	0	7
<i>De substantia orbis</i>	4	0	4
<i>Commentary on De caelo</i>	2	0	2
<i>loci non inventi</i>	2	0	2
Number of quotations	40+(2)	(1)	40+(3) ⁷⁴

⁷⁴ In three instances (numbers between round brackets) a Themistian dictum, which Eckhart elsewhere ascribes to Averroes, is quoted without any mention of the commenta-

Eckhart's writings	Number of Averroes quotations
<i>Expositio s. Evangelii secundum Iohannem</i>	14 ⁷⁵
<i>Liber parabolarum Genesis</i>	9
<i>Expositio Libri Genesis</i>	6
<i>Expositio Libri Sapientiae</i>	5
<i>Sermones</i>	4
<i>Quaestiones Parisienses</i>	2
<i>Responsio ad articulos sibi impositos</i>	1
<i>Expositio Libri Exodi</i>	1
<i>German sermons</i>	1
Number of quotations	43

Eckhart does not quote Averroes in the German works, the only, partial, exception to this fact being the Averroean–Themistian dictum, often quoted in the Latin works and repeated also in the German Sermon 47, where, however, it is ascribed generically to a Greek master without mention either of Themistius or Averroes.⁷⁶ The absence of Averroes quotations must be interpreted as a radicalization of the tendency evident in Eckhart's vernacular writings to quote the Islamic and Jewish sources less frequently and to almost always hide them behind the anonymous form of *meister* quotations.⁷⁷

3.2 *The Averroes Quotations and Their Sources*

The Averroes quotations that completely lack any indication as to the location of the passage in the source amount to about 50 per cent, a percentage much higher than that of the Avicenna and Avicbron quotations: nine quotations out of 16 in the *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, five out

tor's name: see Eckhart, *In Gen. I*, n. 120, LW I, 275, 11–276, 2; *In Genesis II*, n. 214, LW I, 690, 7–8; Pr. 47, DW II, 396, 2–3.

⁷⁵ One of the 14 quotations occurs not in the text itself of the *Expositio*, but in the *Tabula Auctoritatum* attached to it: see Eckhart, *Tabula Auctoritatum Expositionis Evangelii secundum Iohannem*, LW III, 655, 7–8.

⁷⁶ Eckhardus, Pr. 47, DW II, 396, 2–3: "Hie von spricht ein kriechischer meister, daz got alle créatûren halte als in einem zoume ze wûrkenne nâch sînem glichnisse." However, the possibility must not be ruled out of Averroes being referred to in one of the numerous still unidentified *meister* quotations.

⁷⁷ This tendency, already noticed in the case of Avicenna and Avicbron, is confirmed also by Eckhart's quoting of Maimonides.

of nine in the *Commentary on De anima*, and four out of seven in the *Commentary on the Physics*.⁷⁸

The biggest difference between the Averroes quotations and those of Avicenna and Avicbron, however, lies in the fact that none of the 43 Averroes quotations is literal.⁷⁹ How can this surprising fact be explained? Does this mean that Eckhart did not read Averroes's works firsthand?

The question is certainly paradoxical, for it is difficult to believe that Eckhart did not have direct access to Averroes's writings, which were at that time in common use among Latin schoolmen, especially as an invaluable companion to Aristotle's works. Considering this aspect as well as the fact that Eckhart lived and taught in Paris and Cologne, two leading centers of learning in 13th- and 14th-century medieval Europe, where Averroes's writings were easily at hand, I am inclined to think that Eckhart did have ample opportunity to read the originals. Yet, Eckhart's works clearly indicate that, when it comes to citing Averroes, Eckhart seems to have preferred to quote him via intermediary sources rather than to draw on his original works; as we shall see, this is particularly evident in a certain number of Averroes quotations.

1)

- (a) *Liber parabol. Gen.*, n. 138, LW I/1, 604, 5–7: Intellectus autem in nobis se habet sicut tabula nuda et rasa, secundum philosophum, et est in ordine intellectualium sicut materia prima in ordine corporalium, ut ait commentator.
- (b) *Expos. evang. Iohann.*, n. 139, LW III, 118, 1–2: Homo autem in regione intellectuali infimum gradum tenet sicut materia in corporalibus, ut ait commentator.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ The three quotations ascribed only to Themistius are excluded from this count. When quoting texts from *De substantia orbis* (4) and the *Commentary on De coelo* (2), Eckhart, by contrast, always mentions the title of the work he is quoting and, sometimes, he also gives more precise indications. There are also two quotations attributed by Eckhart to the "Commentator," without further indication, whose sources have not been identified by the editors of Eckhart's *Opera omnia*: see Eckhardus, *Sermo XXVII*, n. 272, LW IV, 248, 1–2; *Sermo XLVI*, n. 470, LW IV, 388, 13–15.

⁷⁹ Rather faithful, but nevertheless not literal, is one quotation occurring in the *Commentary on the Gospel of John*: Eckhart, *In Ioh.*, n. 678, LW III, 592, 11–12: "Unde ibidem dicitur ex Aristotele quod *quies quae est in terra est fortior virtute caeli*." See Averroes, *De substantia orbis*, ed. (Venetiis: 1562–74), 5, 11rBC: "et ideo dicit quod *quies, quae est in ea, contingit necessario ut sit fortior virtute coeli*" [My italics]. It must also be noted that none of the implicit quotations suggested by the editors of Eckhart's *Opera omnia* is verbatim.

⁸⁰ The same sentence appears in Eckhart's writings also without being attributed to

These two quotations merge two different texts from Averroes's *Commentary on De anima*, the one stating that the material intellect is the lowest in the hierarchy of intellectual substances,⁸¹ the other comparing the material intellect with prime matter.⁸² The merging is already found in Thomas Aquinas's writings, notably in his *De ente et essentia*, which may be Eckhart's direct source:

anima humana, que tenet ultimum gradum in substantiis intellectualibus. Unde intellectus possibilis eius se habet ad formas intelligibiles sicut materia prima, que tenet ultimum gradum in esse sensibili, ad formas sensibiles, ut Commentator in III De anima dicit; et ideo Philosophus comparat eam tabule in qua nichil est scriptum.⁸³

The analogies between the two Eckhart texts and the *De ente et essentia* passage are obvious: in particular, the text (a) presents the same combination of *auctoritates* (Averroes and Aristotle's *De anima* 3, 4 429b31–430a1), whereas the formula "infimum gradum tenet" of text (b) resembles that of the *De ente* text ("tenet ultimum gradum").⁸⁴

Averroes: see Eckhardus, *In Gen. II*, n. 113; LW I/ 1, 579, 6–8: "intellectus hominis infimum locum tenet in regione intellectuali, sicut materia prima in corporalibus."

⁸¹ Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima libros*, ed. F.S. Crawford, Corpus Commentarium Averrois in Aristotelem 6, 1 (Cambridge, Mass.: 1953), III comm. 19, 442, 59–64: "proportio intellectus agentis ad intellectum patientem est sicut proportio principii moventis quoquo modo ad materiam motam; agens autem semper est nobilius patiente, et principium nobilius materia. Et ideo opinandum est secundum Aristotelem quod ultimus intellectus abstractorum in ordine est iste intellectus materialis."

⁸² Averroes, *Comm. magnum in De an.*, ed. F.S. Crawford, III comm. 5, 387, 27–388, 32: "Et cum ista est diffinitio intellectus materialis, manifestum est quod differt apud ipsum a prima materia in hoc quod iste est in potentia omnes intentiones formarum universalium materialium, prima autem materia est in potentia omnes istae formae sensibiles non cognoscens neque comprehendens."

⁸³ Thomas Aquinas, *De ente et essentia*, cura et studio Fratrum Praedicatorum, (Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera Omnia) 43 (Rome: 1976), cap. 4, 377, 178–85.

⁸⁴ There are further parallels in Thomas's writings which could have inspired Eckhart: see Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae De veritate*, cura et studio Fratrum Praedicatorum, (Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera Omnia) 22 (Rome: 1970–76), quaest. 8 art. 6 resp., 238, 154–58: "aliquid ut potentia tantum, ut intellectus possibilis, quod hoc modo se habet in ordine intelligibilium sicut materia prima in ordine sensibilibus, sicut dicit Commentator in III De anima;" quaest. 10, art. 8 resp., 322, 258–66: "Anima enim nostra in genere intellectualium tenet ultimum locum, sicut materia prima in genere sensibilibus, ut patet per Commentatorem in III De anima: sicut enim materia prima est in potentia ad omnes formas sensibiles, ita et intellectus possibilis noster ad omnes formas intelligibiles, unde in ordine intelligibilium est sicut potentia pura ut materia in ordine sensibilibus."

2)

Five times in the Latin works and once in the German ones, Eckhart quotes the Themistian dictum that nature acts as though it is reminded ("rememorata") by higher causes of intellectual nature:

- (a) *Liber parab. Gen.*, n. 203, LW I/1, 676, 4–6: "Et commentator XII Metaphysicae ait ex Themistio: tota natura agit tamquam rememorata a causis altioribus, intelligentia scilicet aut intellectu;"
- (b) *Expos. evang. Iohann.*, n. 518, LW III, 448, 4–5: "Tota enim natura agit tamquam rememorata a causis altioribus, ut commentator inducit ex Themistio;"
- (c) *Expos. evang. Iohann. (Tabula auctor.)*, LW III, 655, 5–7: "Secundo habes quod tam intellectus est principium alicuius quam natura. 'Opus enim naturae' est 'opus intelligentiae,' et tota natura agit tamquam rememorata a causis altioribus, ut ex Themistio inducit commentator XII Metaphysicae;"
- (d) *Expos. libri Gen.*, n. 120, LW I/1, 275, 11–276, 2: "secundum illud Themistii: tota natura agit tamquam rememorata a causis altioribus, sicut sagitta dirigitur a sagittante;"
- (e) *Liber parab. Gen.*, n. 214, LW I/1, 690, 6–9: "omne ens reale in natura procedit ad certos fines et per media determinata tamquam rememoratum per causam altiore, ut ait Themistius. Propter quod etiam opus naturae dicitur et est opus intelligentiae;"
- (f) *Pr.* 47, DW III, 396, 2: "Hie von spricht ein krieichischer meister, daz got alle cr  t  ren halte als in einem zoume ze w  rkenne n  ch sinem gl  chnisse."

A text from Averroes's *Commentary on the Metaphysics* is originally behind this dictum,⁸⁵ and Eckhart is fully aware of this derivation, for he explicitly ascribes the dictum to the commentator three times. Yet it seems quite clear that it did not stem directly from the Averroes text, but reached Eckhart by way of another source. Indeed, a few decades before Eckhart wrote his works, the dictum had already started to circulate as such apart

⁸⁵ Averroes, *Commentarium in Metaphysicam*, ed. (Venetiis: 1562–74), XII 18, 303v1K.L.305rDE: "aliquid rememorat ipsam (scilicet naturam) de causis nobilioribus... haec igitur sunt verba Themistii... Secundum hoc igitur est intelligendum, quod natura facit aliquid perfecte, et ordinate, quamvis non intelligat, quasi esset rememorata ex virtutibus agentibus nobilioribus ea, quae dicuntur intelligentiae."

from Averroes's *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, as a reference to it in Thomas Aquinas's *De malo* shows:

Praeterea, Commentator in XI Metaphysice inducit verba Themistii dicentis quod natura inferior agit quasi memorata a superioribus causis.⁸⁶

This is not tantamount to saying that the *De malo* passage is the source behind Eckhart's quotations; rather, the formulation ("tota [enim] natura agit tamquam rememorata a causis altioribus") of four out of the five quotations in Eckhart's Latin writings exhibits differences with respect to the wording adopted by Thomas (*tota* instead of *inferior*, *rememorata* instead of *memorata*, and *altioribus* instead of *superioribus*), differences which suggest Eckhart's dependence on a source different from Thomas's *De malo*.⁸⁷ The existence of the *De malo* passage, however, shows that Eckhart did not need to draw the dictum from the original text in Averroes's *Commentary on the Metaphysics*.

In two instances ([c] and [e]) Eckhart combines the dictum with another famous axiom, which states that the work of nature is the work of intelligence. Since such a combination is documented in the famous florilegium *Auctoritates Aristotelis*, there might be a common source on which both Eckhart and the *Auctoritates* depend.⁸⁸ Otherwise, it may well be that Eckhart himself was responsible for combining the two authorities influenced by a few texts of Thomas Aquinas which, though lacking any reference to the Themistian dictum, put forward the view that nature is ordered by an intellectual principle to the effect that its work is the work of intelligence.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de malo*, cura et studio Fratrum Praedicatorum (Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera omnia 23) (Roma-Paris: 1982), quaest. 3 art. 3 arg. 10, 71, 61–64. The Themistian dictum, worded in a different way and without mention of Averroes, is also to be found also in Thomas, *Scriptum super I librum Sententiarum*, ed. P. Mandonnet, (Paris: 1929), dist. 43 quaest. 2 art. 1 sol., 1008: "Ab ordinante separato, operationes naturae quae sunt ad finem, certitudinaliter tendunt in finem illum ex provisione et ordinatione alicujus causae sic ordinantis. Unde Themistius dicit, II *Physic.*, cap. 4, quod natura agit quasi esset mota ex causis superioribus, id est in quantum est in ea quidam instinctus ab ordinatione substantiarum separatarum."

⁸⁷ The differences, however, may also be explained as modifications which Eckhart himself introduced in Thomas's text.

⁸⁸ *Auctoritates Aristotelis* (1) XII nn. 281–82, ed. J. Hamesse, in J. Hamesse, *Les Auctoritates Aristotelis. Un florilège médiéval étude historique et édition critique*, (Philosophes Médiévaux) 17 (Louvain-Paris: 1974), 138, 84–139, 86: "Natura nihil facit, nisi rememorata a causis superioribus quae sunt deus et intelligentiae. Opus naturae est opus intelligentiae."

⁸⁹ See Thomas Aquinas, *In libros Physicorum expositio*, ed. M. Maggilo (Turin-Rome: 1965), 2, lectio 4 171 (6), 87: "ab aliquo principio intellectivo tota natura ordinatur

While citing the Themistian dictum in the *Commentary on Genesis* (d), Eckhart is also certainly bearing in mind a text from Thomas's *Summa theologiae*: indeed, as a few literal borrowings (words in italics) indicate, the context in which Eckhart inserts the dictum is a clear reworking of the answer to the fourth argument of *Summa theologiae* I quaest. 22 art. 2.

Also the simile of the arrow given direction and force by the archer who shoots it, which appears both in the text from the *Commentary on Genesis* reported in the synopsis and in the quotation contained in the *Commentary on the Gospel of John*,⁹⁰ is present in a number of loci of Thomas's work, where, however, it does not seem to be associated with the Themistian dictum.⁹¹ It may well be that Eckhart juxtaposed both the Themistian dictum and the simile of the arrow because of the similarity of the respective Thomistic contexts in which they appear.

ad finem suum, ut sic opus naturae videatur esse opus intelligentiae, dum *per determinata media ad certos fines procedit*: quod etiam in operando ars imitatur." Eckhart bears in mind this text in the case of the quotation (e) because the section in italics is reported verbatim by him. Analogous texts in Thomas's writings are numerous: see, e.g. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae De potentia*, ed. P.M. Pession (Turin-Rome: 1965), quaest. 3 art. 15, resp., 83: "Natura vero tendit in finem sicut mota et directa ab alio intelligente et volente, sicut patet in sagitta, quae tendit in signum determinatum propter directionem sagittantis; et per hunc modum a Philosophis dicitur, quod opus naturae est opus intelligentiae;" *Scriptum super I librum Sententiarum*, ed. P. Mandonnet, dist. 35 quaest. 1 art. 1, sol., 809: "unde oportet quod dirigatur per aliquod prius agens, sicut sagitta tendit in determinatum locum per determinationem sagittantis; et ita est in omnibus quae agunt per necessitatem naturae; quia horum operatio est determinata per intellectum aliquem instituentem naturam; unde Philosophus, II *Physic.*, text. 75, dicit, quod opus naturae est opus intelligentiae;" *Scriptum super III librum Sententiarum*, ed. M.F. Moos (Paris: 1933), dist. 33 quaest. 2 art. 5, resp., 1068–69; *Quaestiones disputatae De veritate*, cura et studio Fratrum Praedicatorum, quaest. 5 art. 2 resp., 144, 166–74. Interesting remarks on Thomas's and Albert the Great's recourse to the *opus naturae* axiom as well as the lists of its occurrences in both authors are to be found in J.A. Weisheipl, "The axiom 'Opus naturae est opus intelligentiae' and its origins," in *Albertus Magnus, Doctor Universalis 1280/1980*, ed. G. Meyer and A. Zimmermann (Mainz: 1980), 441–63. See also L. Hödl, "'Opus naturae est opus intelligentiae.' Ein neuplatonisches Axiom im aristotelischen Verständnis des Albertus Magnus," in *Averroismus im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance*, ed. F. Niewöhner and L. Sturlese (Zürich: 1994), 132–48.

⁹⁰ Eckhart, *In Ioh.*, n. 518, LW III, 448, 4–7: "Tota enim natura agit tamquam rememorata a causis altioribus, ut commentator inducit ex Themistio. Adhuc autem ens non cognitivum non tenderet in certum finem per determinata media nisi directa a cognitivo praestituente sibi finem, sicut videmus in sagitta et in sagittante."

⁹¹ Besides the loci referred to in note 90, see, e.g. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1 quaest. 59 art. 3 resp., 281; 1 quaest. 103 art. 1 ad 3, 481; 1, 2 quaest. 1 art. 2 resp., 557; *Summa contra gentiles*, vol. 3, ed. C. Pera, P. Marc, and P. Caramello (Turin-Rome: 1961), 3 cap. 16 n.1988, 18, 24–26; *In libros Physicorum expositio*, ed. M. Maggiolo, 2 lectio 12 250 (1), 122.

THOMAS, *Summa theologiae* 1,
quaest. 22 art. 2 ad 4

Ad quartum dicendum quod in hoc quod dicitur Deum hominem sibi reliquisse, non excluditur homo a divina providentia, sed ostenditur quod *non praefigitur ei virtus operativa determinata ad unum*, sicut *rebus* naturalibus; quae aguntur tantum, quasi *ab altero directae in finem*, non autem *seipsa agunt*, quasi se dirigentia in finem, ut creaturae rationales *per liberum arbitrium*, quo *consiliantur et eligunt*. Unde *signanter dicit, in manu consilii sui*.

ECKHART, *Expositio libri Genesis*
n.120; LW I/1, 275, 11–276,2

Rursus *faciamus*. Dicunt expositores ex hoc verbo *faciamus* significari hominem pro sui dignitate prae aliis creaturis factum quasi ex consilio divino. Quod quidem verum est, si intelligamus hominem factum de consilio, quia fecit ipsum consiliativum, secundum illud Eccli. 15: “deus ab initio constituit hominem et reliquit eum in manu consilii sui.” In *rebus* enim, quibus *praefigitur virtus operativa determinata ad unum*, non agunt libere nec *a se ipsis*, sed *ab altero diriguntur in finem*, secundum illud Themistii: tota natura agit tamquam rememorata a causis altioribus, sicut sagitta dirigitur a sagittante. Homo autem *per liberum arbitrium*, quo *consiliatur et eligit*, ex se ipso forma sibi inhaerente in finem dirigitur. Propter quod *signanter dicitur*: “deus constituit hominem et reliquit eum *in manu consilii sui*.” ex se ipso forma sibi inhaerente in finem dirigitur. Propter quod *signanter dicitur*: “deus constituit hominem et reliquit eum *in manu consilii sui*.”

3)

Liber parab. Gen. n. 43, LW I/1, 509, 11–510, 2: “Item tertio, quod est causa extra genus et super omne genus et per consequens ‘omnium generum perfectiones’ prae habens, ut etiam commentator dicit.”

The sentence according to which God contains the perfections of all of the genera rephrases the content of a part of comment 21 of Averroes’s *Commentary on the Metaphysics* Book 5.⁹² Most probably, Eckhart’s passage

⁹² Averroes, *In librum V Metaphysicorum Aristotelis Commentarius*, ed. R. Ponzalli (Bern: 1971), V 21, 182, 71–82: “illa igitur, quae dicuntur perfecta per se sunt a quibus nihil

depends on one of the several scholastic sources that quoted the dictum before he did.⁹³

4)

Expos. libri Gen., n. 40, LW I/1, 215, 12–14: “Privatio enim formarum et successio ipsarum per transmutationem materiam docuit, sicut actio formam docuit, ut dicit commentator quod actio facit scire formam, transmutatio materiam.”⁹⁴

Action makes form known, while transmutation makes matter known; so goes a saying which is given by Eckhart a formulation very close to that which we find in the florilegium *Auctoritates Aristotelis*, where, like in Eckhart, it is credited to the commentator: “Sicut transmutatio facit scire materiam, sic operatio formam.”⁹⁵ In both Eckhart and the *Auctoritates*, the dictum is based on the contrast between *transmutatio* and

diminuitur in bonitate et quibus nihil est nobilius in illo genere, sed sunt in summo nobilitatis per se. Et dixit hoc quia ista sunt perfecta in quantitate et qualitate primo et essentialiter. Deinde dicit: *Et quaedam modo universali*, etc., idest: et diffinitio eorum universaliter est talis: perfecta sunt illa quorum nihil invenitur per quod dicuntur imperfecta in eis aut extrinsecus. Et ista est dispositio primi principii, scilicet Dei. Et forte intelligit per hoc quod dixit: *Et quibus nihil est extra* et a quibus nihil diminuitur ex eis quae sunt. Et hoc potest intelligi per hoc quod dixit: *Ita quod in eis non est nobilitas in unoquoque generum*, idest quando de eis non diminuitur nobilitas ex eo quod invenitur in unoquoque generum.”

⁹³ See, e.g. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae De potentia*, ed. P.M. Pession, quaest. 7 art. 5 resp., 199: “Confirmatur etiam per hoc quod habetur V *Metaph.* [comm. 21], quod simpliciter perfectum est quod habet in se perfectiones omnium generum; quod Commentator ibidem de Deo exponit;” *Scriptum super I librum Sententiarum*, ed. P. Mandonnet, dist. 8 quaest. 4 art. 2, 221: “Sed esse divinum nullo modo determinatum est ad aliquod genus; quin imo comprehendit in se nobilitates omnium generum, ut dicit Philosophus et Commentator in V *Metaph.*, text. 21,” dist. 35 quaest. 1 art. 1, 808: “Ergo Deo, in quo omnium generum perfectiones adunantur, ut in V *Met.*, text. 21, dicitur, scientia deesse non potest;” Aegidius Romanus, *Questiones metaphysicales* (Venetiis: 1501; facsimile reprint Frankfurt am Main: 1966), X quaest. 6, 38a: “Item perfectiones omnium generum sunt in primo sicut dicit Commentator in V metaphysice;” Henricus de Gandavo, *Summa (Quaestiones ordinariae)*, ed. L. Hödl, Henrici de Gandavo Opera Omnia 29 (Leuven: 1998) art. 42, quaest. 2, 36, 16–18: “In oppositum est Philosophus V *Metaphysicae*, ubi dicit quod *universaliter perfecta* omnium generum perfectiones in se habent, ubi dicit Commentator quod ‘ista est dispositio primi principii, scilicet Dei.’”

⁹⁴ In the *Liber parabolarum Genesis* Eckhart repeats the saying in a slightly different form: Eckhart, *In Gen. II*, n. 19, LW I/1, 585, 9: “Actio enim formam docuit, passio materiam, ut ait commentator.”

⁹⁵ *Auctoritates Aristotelis* (1) IX 216, ed. J. Hamesse, 133, 80. The florilegium lists the sentence twice, the second time in a slightly different formulation: *Auctoritates Aristotelis* (1) 22, ed. J. Hamesse, 231, 69: “Transmutatio arguit materiam, operatio vero formam.” Averroes, *De subst. orb.*, ed. (Venetiis: 1562–74), 2, 7vHI, is referred to by the editor of the *Auctoritates* as the original source for the latter sentence.

actio-operatio, a contrast which is made by conflating two distinct loci of Averroes's *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, which are therefore only the initial, but not the direct, source for Eckhart's quotation.⁹⁶ As in the case of the Themistian dictum, therefore, at a certain point someone seems to have read this saying in the text of Averroes and started to cite it separately as a standard authority; we find an instance of this independent circulation already in Albert the Great's *Quaestiones super De animalibus*, where the saying is worded very similarly to Eckhart's formulation, the only differences being *operatio* instead of *actio* and the presence of *sicut* before *transmutatio*. However, the fact that Albert does not attribute the sentence to Averroes points to someone else as the actual source of Eckhart's quotation.⁹⁷

5)

In two instances, Eckhart defends the thesis that time does not really exist by appealing, among others, to Averroes's commentary on Book 4 of the *Physics*:

- (a) *Expos. libri Sap.*, n. 296, LW II, 631, 6–10: "Patet igitur ratio, quare secundum philosophum et commentatorem, IV Physicorum, et secundum Augustinum, XI Confessionum, tempus non est extra in rerum natura. Tempus enim formaliter numerus est, numerus autem per se, secundum se et ex sui natura non est, cum sit privatio et oppositio unius, quod cum ente convertitur."
- (b) *Responsio ad articulos sibi impositos*, n. 74, LW V, 337, 3–6: "Est autem verior et subtilior intellectus, quare deus non est in tempore nec quidquid habet facere cum tempore, quia tempus non est, ut patet ex

⁹⁶ Averroes, *Comm. in Metaph.*, ed. (Venetiis: 1562–74), VIII 12, 220vG: "quemadmodum transmutatio in substantia fecit nos scire materiam primam esse, ita transmutatio in loco fecit nos scire, quod corpora coelestia sunt habentia potentias in ubi;" XII 14, 301rE: "Forma enim non comprehenditur secundum sensum, sed secundum suam actionem."

⁹⁷ Albertus, *Quaestiones super De Animalibus*, ed. E. Filthaut, Alberti Magni Opera Omnia 12 (Münster: 1955), 196, 55–56: "quia operatio facit scire formam, sicut transmutatio materiam." The two sentences of the dictum can be seen and compared in: Sigerus de Brabantia, *Quaestiones in Metaphysicam (Reportation de Cambridge)*, ed. A. Maurer, Philosophes Médiévaux 25 (Louvain-la-Neuve: 1983), 4, 17, 425, 45: "Sicut autem dicit Averroes, transmutatio fecit scire materiam;" 426, 52: "Idem Commentator dicit quod actio fecit scire formam." See also Sigerus de Brabantia, *Quaestiones in Metaphysicam (Reportation de Munich)*, ed. W. Dunphy, Philosophes Médiévaux 24 (Louvain-le-Neuve: 1981), 3, 23, 155, 98.8 and 3, 24, 212, 61–62.73–74.

philosopho, commentatore et Augustino. Deus ergo non est in tempore, sicut esse non est in non ente.”

Rather than a true quotation, this is a reference to an established set of *auctoritates* concerning the issue of time (Aristotle's *Physics* Book 4, Averroes's commentary on that book, and Augustine's Book 11 of the *Confessions*), a set which Eckhart could also find in Dietrich of Freiberg's *De mensuris*:

Si igitur mensura alicuius corporalis passionis, qualis est motus, non est aliquid reale naturale extra animam existens, sed determinatur talis mensura motui opere rationis, quae mensura seu numerus motus est tempus secundum Philosophum IV *Physicorum* et Commentatorem ibidem et Augustinum XI Confessionum⁹⁸

For the rest of the Averroes quotations, the dependence on intermediary sources, though less evident, is nevertheless highly likely: such is the case with those Averroes quotations that succinctly condense the doctrinal content of some Averroes loci which in Middle Ages had become commonplace authorities on given issues (LW I/1, 617, 12–618, 1 and LW III, 436, 5–6 on the notion of the identity of intellect and intelligible, LW II, 427, 10–428, 2 and LW II, 468, 10–469, 1 on the *dimensiones indeterminatae* theory). In scholastic literature there also exist parallels to the texts in which Eckhart contrasts Averroes's and Avicenna's views on specific topics (LW III, 397, 11–14 on the theory of vision; LW III, 614, 1–8 on the transmission of smell; LW V, 82, 14–83, 2 on the substantial forms of the elements making up a composite).

From the analysis in this section it should be clear that Eckhart derived many of his Averroes quotations from intermediary sources rather than Averroes's original writings. Based on this fact, it is not reckless to assume that all or most of the non-literal Averroes quotations that are not examined here depend on other sources, even though so far I have not been able to trace them. These direct sources might be found in the tradition of florilegia or other didactic tools then in use or might be oral, but at this stage of my enquiry this conjecture lacks positive proof.

⁹⁸ Theodoricus de Vriberg, *De mensuris*, ed. R. Rehn, CPTMA II, 3 (Hamburg: 1983), 8 n. 5, 239, 59–64. See also Theodoricus de Vriberg, *De origine rerum praedicamentarium*, ed. L. Sturlese, CPTMA 2, 3, 5 n. 2, 181, 12–18.

3.3 *The Themes of the Averroes Quotations*

What are the issues on which Eckhart invokes Averroes's authority? From the discussion of some Averroes quotations in the previous section, four themes of great interest have emerged: the idea of nature as directed in its processes by intellectual substances, God as the utmost perfect being beyond any genus and thus having all the perfections of all genera, time as non-real being, and the human intellect as the lowest in the hierarchy of intellectual substances. As for the last of these four themes, it is worth observing that the Averroes dictum is quoted within a discussion meant to prove that the human intellect needs the help of the senses to function. On this issue Eckhart sees a consensus between Avicenna, Avicbron, and Averroes, and uses different passages taken from these sources to support the standard Aristotelian view that phantasmata are required if an intellection is to take place.⁹⁹

Like Avicenna, Averroes is an important source for Eckhart in relation to topics of natural philosophy such as the role of light in vision (LW III, 20, 6–10; 397, 13–14), the material nature of fire (LW II, 468, 6–7), the transmission of smell (LW II, 526, 11–527, 1; LW III, 614, 6–8), the limited brightness of the moon (LW I/1, 262, 1–2), the composition of the elements in compounds (LW V, 82, 14–83, 2), the equivocal nature of heavenly bodies with respect to earthly bodies (LW II, 427, 10–428, 2), the stability of the earth (LW III, 592, 11–12; LW I/1, 192, 13–193, 1; LW IV, 327, 9–10), and so on.

Furthermore, as Kurt Flasch points out, Eckhart, following in the wake of Dietrich of Freiberg, appeals to Averroes with respect to two crucial aspects of his teaching: the notion of the identity of the intellect and the intelligible and the metaphysics of substantial form.

The concept of the identity of the intellect and the intelligible is crucial for the understanding of Eckhart's teaching on the Trinity, for by means of it he expresses the relation between God the Father and the Son, who is His Image identical with Him.¹⁰⁰ The very same relationship of coessential

⁹⁹ Eckhart, *In Gen. II*, n. 113, LW I/1, 579, 6–580, 6; n. 138, LW I/1, 604, 3–605, 2; *In Gen. I*, n. 237, LW I/1, 381, 13–382, 3.

¹⁰⁰ Eckhart attributes the concept of the identity of the intellect and the intelligible to Averroes twice: Eckhart, *In Gen. II*, n. 148, LW I/1, 617, 10–618, 1; *In Ioh.*, n. 505, LW III, 436, 4–6. The editors of Eckhart's works refer to two different loci in Averroes's work: Averroes, *Comm. magnum in De an.*, ed. F.S. Crawford, 3, comm. 5, 404, 503–08; *Comm. in Metaph.*, ed. (Venetiis: 1562–74), 12, comm. 39, 322rDE, 322vL–323rA. The reference to the *Commentary on De anima* seems more appropriate to me.

identity Eckhart perceives to exist between Justice and the just man, insofar as he is just, that is, between God and the human intellect, which, as intellect, is the image of the divine substance. The univocal conaturality between God and the human intellect, insofar as it is intellect, explains why the distinctively Averroistic doctrine of *copulatio-coniunctio*, which had been a fundamental aspect of the noetics and the metaphysics of Albert the Great and Dietrich of Freiberg, becomes marginal in Eckhart's thought: as intellect, the human intellect is already one with God and does not need to go through a process of progressive actualization in order to be completely informed by the agent intellect.¹⁰¹ Yet, though in its ground already one with God, the human soul needs to recover awareness of this coessential unity by ridding its intellect of the limitations and distinctions marking finite and created beings and by getting ready for the birth of God's Word in itself.

The marginalization of the doctrine of *copulatio*—especially of its Averroistic version—is in accordance with Eckhart's underestimation of, or disinterest in, the agent intellect. Indeed, Eckhart emphasizes in the intellect the dimension of openness and passivity, typical of the possible intellect, rather than activity: intellect, as intellect, is unmixed with anything, separated and free from everything and, as a consequence, is an image of everything and is able to become everything and to receive God.¹⁰²

Several of the Averroes texts that Eckhart quotes can be grouped under the heading of metaphysics of substantial form. One of the basic convictions on which Eckhart grounds his metaphysical teaching is that a compound derives what it has of perfection and activity from its form, while

¹⁰¹ The allusion to Averroes's explanation of how the *separata* are known is the only explicit hint at the Averroean doctrine of *coniunctio* throughout Eckhart's writings: Eckhardus, *Sermo LV*, n. 546, LW IV, 457, 5: "Hic habet locum via Averrois, quomodo cognoscuntur separata." On Eckhart's attitude towards the *coniunctio* theory, see K. Flasch, *Meister Eckhart. Die Geburt der "Deutschen Mystik,"* 114–15.

¹⁰² See B. Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart. Analogie, Univozität und Einheit* (Hamburg: 1983), 35; N. Largier, "intellectus in deum ascensus' Intellekttheoretische Auseinandersetzungen in den Texten der deutschen Mystik," *Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 69 (1995), 435–43; A. Beccarisi, "'Der hoechste under den meistern:' Eckhart e il *De anima* di Aristotele," in *Studi sulle fonti di Meister Eckhart I*, ed. L. Sturlese, 15–26. K. Flasch, "Converti ut imago—Rückkehr als Bild. Eine Studie zur Theorie des Intellekts bei Dietrich von Freiberg und Meister Eckhart," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 45 (1998), 141–50, refutes the thesis that Eckhart would not have been interested in the agent intellect theory: even though the technical formula *intellectus agens* is as such rare in Eckhart's work, the intellect agent, the Aristotelian *nous*, remains the paradigm of Eckhart's understanding of the intellect, of the "Etwas in der Seele."

it owes its passivity and infirmity to matter. For this very reason Averroes asserts that action reveals the agent's form, while passion makes known its matter.¹⁰³ Moreover, form is not only the principle of unity¹⁰⁴ and the cause of being—Eckhart repeatedly affirms that form is being and gives being¹⁰⁵—but also the principle of intelligibility, for it represents the quiddity of a thing.¹⁰⁶

By combining scriptural and philosophical authorities, Eckhart makes clear the nature of quiddity. The *principium* referred to at the beginning of Genesis ("In principio creavit deus caelum et terram," Gen. 1:1) and at the beginning of the Gospel of John ("In principio erat verbum" "omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil," Jn 1:1.3) is interpreted by Eckhart as the ideal model (*ratio idealis*) according to which everything was created by the Divine Intellect. This model is then said to coincide with the Platonic idea, which is at the same time *ratio essendi* and *ratio cognoscendi* of a thing. Based on a text from Averroes's *Commentary on Metaphysics*, Eckhart comes to identify the *ratio* of a thing as its quiddity: the ancient philosophers wished to know the quiddity of a sensible thing, this text reads, because, once that quiddity is known, the First Cause of everything becomes known. According to Eckhart, the First Cause referred to by Averroes has to be understood not as God, as some erroneously think, but as the quiddity of things, namely as their *ratio*, which is expressed by their definition.¹⁰⁷ Elsewhere, Eckhart, relying on the same Averroes text,

¹⁰³ Eckhart, *In Gen. II*, n. 119, LW I/1, 585, 5–9: "omne, quod actionis est et perfectionis, debetur composito ratione formae et activi, viri scilicet, e converso omne, quod est passionis et infirmitatis, convenit ipsi ratione materiae sive passivi, mulieris scilicet. Actio enim formam docuit, passio materiam, ut ait commentator."

¹⁰⁴ Eckhart, *In Gen. II*, n. 123, LW I/1, 588, 6–8: "activum et passivum maxime in univocis duo sunt sive distincta propter materiam, unum autem per formam, ut ait philosophus et commentator eius." The editor of Eckhart's *Liber parabolarum Genesis* refers to two passages from the *Commentary on the Metaphysics* as source: Averroes, *Comm. in Metaph.*, ed. (Venetiis: 1562–74), 8 comm. 15, 16, 223vL, 224vM.

¹⁰⁵ See, e.g. Eckhart, *In Exod.*, n. 52, LW II, 55, 11; *In Ioh.*, n. 100, LW III, 86, 5–6; n. 325, LW III, 273, 10–11; n. 338, LW III, 287, 3–4; n. 342, LW III, 290, 15. The editors of the *Commentary on the Gospel of John* suggest a passage from Averroes's *Commentary on De anima* as one of the sources behind this thesis: Averroes, *Comm. magnum in De an.*, ed. F.S. Crawford, 2 comm. 8, 143, 99: "et esse non est in actu nisi forme."

¹⁰⁶ See Eckhart, *In Ioh.*, n. 467, LW III, 399, 6–13.

¹⁰⁷ Eckhart, *In Gen. I*, n. 3, LW I/1, 186, 13–187, 10: "De primo sciendum quod principium, in quo creavit deus caelum et terram, est ratio idealis. Et hoc est quod Ioh. 1 dicitur: 'in principio erat verbum'—Graecus habet logos, id est ratio—et sequitur: 'omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil.' Uniuscuiusque enim rei universaliter principium et radix est ratio ipsius rei. Hinc est quod Plato ponebat ideas sive rationes rerum principia omnium tam essendi quam sciendi. Hinc est et tertio quod commentator VII

adds that quiddity, being the *ratio* of a thing, is the root and the cause of whatever is affirmed or denied of that thing.¹⁰⁸

The notion of quiddity as ideal *ratio* is strictly connected with Eckhart's characteristic concept of a twofold mode of existence (*duplex esse*) of creatures, in favor of which he mobilizes an array of sources, including again Plato, Averroes's *Commentary on the Metaphysics*, and the Gospel of John.¹⁰⁹ According to the Dominican Master, each created reality possesses both a virtual existence (*esse virtuale*) and a formal existence (*esse formale*), the former being its mode of existence in its original causes, notably the Divine Word—in other words, the virtual existence of a creature is its being an ideal *ratio* in God's mind—the latter being the way of existing which each reality has in its form in the external world. The double level of existence of creatures corresponds to the Platonic distinction between the intellectual world, where the truth resides, and the sensible world, which can be seen and touched by men. Eckhart detects the same distinction also in a verse of the Gospel of John ("quod factum est, in ipso

Metaphysicae dicit quod quiditas rei sensibilis semper fuit desiderata sciri ab antiquis, eo quod scita sciretur causa prima omnium. Vocat autem commentator primam causam non ipsum deum, ut plerique errantes putant, sed ipsam rerum quiditatem, quae ratio rerum est, quam diffinitio indicat, causam primam vocat. Haec enim ratio est rerum 'quod quid est' et omnium rei proprietatum 'propter quid est.' See Averroes, *Comm. in Metaph.*, ed. (Venetiis: 1562–74), VII comm. 5, 156rAB. Among those who think erroneously that the first cause referred to by Averroes is God are Albert the Great and—as A. Beccarisi, "La 'scientia divina' dei filosofi nel *De summo bono* di Ulrico di Strasburgo," *Rivista di Storia della filosofia* 61 (2006), 158–59, points out—Ulrich of Strasbourg: Albertus, *Metaphysica* VII 1 4, ed. B. Geyer, Alberti Magni Opera Omnia 16, 2 (Münster: 1964), 320, 43–54: "Et sic iterum quiditas rei sensibilis conducit ad notitiam causae primae formalis. His igitur de causis ipsa est, quod olim et nunc et semper quaesitum est et quaeritur et inquiretur, quia omnes homines natura scire desiderant hoc modo dictam formam primam, quae est fons formarum, et ultimum finem, qui sicut in duce exercitus universorum, quae sunt, est in motore primo; et ideo semper ab antiquis <quaesitum> de ipsa quiditate substantiae individuae designatae, quid ipsa sit ens, hoc <est> quae substantia sit ipsa quiditas horum sensibilibus;" Ulricus de Argentina, *De summo bono*, ed. S. Pieperhoff, CPTMA 1, 4[1] (Hamburg: 1987), IV 2 3, 71, 89–95: "Dicit etiam Averroes, immo ipse Aristoteles in VII *Metaphysicae*, quod notitia huius substantiae, quae est quiditas primae substantiae, conducit ad notitiam causae primae, secundum quod causa prima est forma prima et ultimus finis. Sic enim quaelibet forma . . . est radius et lumen primae formae, quae est intellectus divinus."

¹⁰⁸ Eckhart, *In Gen. II*, n. 62, LW I/1, 529, 3–7: "Quiditas enim rerum, quae et ratio est, radix et causa prima est omnium, quae de re quacumque vel affirmantur vel negantur. Propter quod commentator super VII *Metaphysicae* dicit quod scita quiditate rerum sensibilibus scitur causa prima omnium. Ipsa enim est causa prima omnium." See also Eckhardus, *In Ioh.*, n. 32, LW III, 26, 1–11; n. 467, LW III, 399, 6–13.

¹⁰⁹ For a discussion of Eckhart's notion of two levels of existence of created beings in the context of his teaching on creation, see B. McGinn, "Do Christian Platonists Really Believe in Creation?" in *God and Creation. An Ecumenical Symposium*, ed. D.B. Burrell and B. McGinn (Notre Dame, Ind.: 1990), 198–205.

vita erat" Jn 1:3–4), which he interprets as signifying that each creature, taken in itself, is in the outer world, for it is created and made, but, taken as contained in the Divine Word, is life.¹¹⁰ An Averroes passage stating that all of the forms in the sublunar world are "virtually" in the celestial mover is employed as corroboration of the distinction *esse virtute-esse formale extra*.¹¹¹

The twofold nature of being is manifest also in the production processes of a human craftsman, who operates in the light of a model that is conceived in his mind and by means of which he is the cause of his artefacts. The Averroes argument that, had it not been for matter, the bath in the mind of the craftsman would be the same as the bath in reality is quoted by Eckhart to point out the double level of existence of artefacts.¹¹²

CONCLUSION

Our analysis of Eckhart's explicit and *meister* quotations of Avicenna, Averroes, and Avicbron has revealed that these thinkers were among the main sources of Eckhart's thought: indeed, they not only inspired, or, contributed to, his reflections on metaphysical, anthropological, and epistemological issues, but—in accordance with Eckhart's conviction about the unity of Truth¹¹³—they also nourished, in combination with other sources, his theological discourse on God's nature (e.g. Avicbron's insistence on the absolute unity of God), on creation (e.g. the discussion of the relationship between *bullitio* and *ebullitio*, inspired by Avicenna's

¹¹⁰ See Eckhart, *In Gen. I*, nn. 77–78, LW I/1, 238, 1–240,7.

¹¹¹ Eckhart, *In Gen. I*, nn. 82–83, LW I/1, 242, 1–4: "Quarto dic quod aquae super caelos et sub caelo dicuntur propter duplex esse rerum, de quo prius dictum est: unum virtute, aliud formale extra. Praedictis attestatur quod commentator Super XII Metaphysicae dicit omnes formas huius mundi esse virtute in motore caeli." See Averroes, *Comm. in Metaph.*, ed. (Venetiis: 1562–74), XII comm. 18, 305v1.

¹¹² Eckhart, *In Gen. II*, n. 56, LW I/1, 524, 8–11: "Divisio enim et numerus suppositorum et in suppositis est, indivisio et unitas ex forma et specie est. Callias enim est alius a Sorte secundum philosophum; et idem esset balneum in anima et balneum extra, si non esset materia, ut ait commentator." See also Eckhardus, *In Ioh.*, n. 37, LW III, 31, 9–12; n. 57, LW III, 48, 7–10. See Averroes, *Comm. in Metaph.*, ed. (Venetiis: 1562–74), XII comm. 36, 318v1K.

¹¹³ See, e.g. Eckhart, *In Ioh.*, n.185, LW III, 154, 14–155, 2: "convenienter valde scriptura sacra sic exponitur, ut in ipsa sint consona, quae philosophi de rerum naturis et ipsarum proprietatibus scripserunt, praesertim cum ex uno fonte et una radice procedat veritatis omne quod verum est, sive essendo sive cognoscendo, in scriptura et in natura;" *In Ioh. prooem.*, n. 3, LW III, 4, 14–17; *In Gen. II prol.*, n. 2, LW I/1, 449, 8–9.

Metaphysics 8, Chapter 6), on the privileged connection between God and the ground of the soul (e.g. Avicenna's notion of the soul), and so on.

An examination of Eckhart's implicit references, which, as stated in the introduction, I have neglected in this chapter, is expected to show that those Arabic and Jewish sources exerted their influence even over other doctrinal points of Eckhart's teachings; yet, on the basis of the explicit quotations alone, we are already able to appreciate to what extent Eckhart's thought is indebted to the philosophy of Avicenna, Averroes, and Avicbron.

PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE AND ECKHART

Elisa Rubino

INTRODUCTION

Ever since the famous article on Augustinian and Dionysian Neoplatonism by Josef Koch,¹ the importance of the influence of the *Corpus areopagiticum* on the thought of Meister Eckhart has been common knowledge among commentators.² Some contemporary scholars have noted the schematic aspect of Koch's interpretation.³ But the conviction in the existence of a strong link between Dionysius and Eckhart, based on the *Theologumena* of the superiority of negative theology and the mystic union with God, is widespread. It has recently received an important confirmation from the authority of Kurt Ruh, who has even attempted to construct and document a "Dionysian phase" in the evolution of the thought of the Dominican preacher and philosopher.⁴

The recent compilation of a cumulative index of the sources cited in the critical edition of Eckhart invites us to carry out a systematic examination of the passages and doctrines of the Areopagite used in the Latin and

¹ J. Koch, *Augustinischer und dionysischer Neuplatonismus und das Mittelalter*, in *Kleine Schriften* 1, (Storia e Letteratura) 127, (Rome: 1973), 3–25.

² É.-H. Weber, "Mystique parce que théologien: Maître Eckhart," *La vie spirituelle* 652, 136 (1982), 730–49. É.-H. Weber, *Eckhart et l'ontothéologisme: histoire et conditions d'une rupture*, in *Maître Eckhart à Paris. Une critique médiévale de l'ontothéologie*, (BEPHE. Sciences religieuses) 86 (Paris: 1984), 13–83. É.-H. Weber, "Maître Eckhart et la grande tradition théologique", in *Eckhardus Theutonicus homo doctus et sanctus. Nachweise und Berichte zum Prozess gegen Meister Eckhart*, ed. H. Stirnimann and R. Imbach, Dokimion 11 (Fribourg: 1992), 97–125. J. Koch, "Über die Lichtsymbolik im Bereich der Philosophie und der Mystik des Mittelalters", in *Kleine Schriften*, 1, 27–67. A. de Libera, *La Mystique Rhénane. D'Albert le Grand à Maître Eckhart* (Paris: 1984), 53–58, 231–316.

³ K. Flasch, *Die Metaphysik des Einen bei Nikolaus von Kues. Problemgeschichtliche Stellung und systematische Bedeutung*, (Studien zur Prolegomenengeschichte der antiken und mittelalterlichen Philosophie) 7 (Leiden: 1973), 236, note 3.

⁴ K. Ruh, *Meister Eckhart. Theologe, Prediger, Mystiker* (Munich: 1985), 47–59. K. Ruh, "Dionysius Areopagita im deutschen Predigtwerk Meister Eckharts," *Perspektiven der Philosophie. Neues Jahrbuch* 13 (1987), 207–23. K. Ruh, "Die 'Mystica Theologia' des Dionysius Pseudo-Areopagita im Lichte mittelalterlicher Kommentatoren," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 122, (1993), 119–45. K. Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, vol. 3 (Munich: 1996), 220–353.

German works. The present chapter contains the results of a first analysis of this material.

1. THE QUANTITATIVE DATA

From the examination of the comprehensive index of the Latin and German works by Eckhart, the total number of Dionysian citations amount to 62. Thirty-six of these are present in the Latin works and 26 in the German works. More precisely, the *De divinis nominibus* is cited 36 times, the *De caelesti hierarchia* 12 times, while themes pertaining to the *De mystica theologia* are cited only five times; there are, in addition, four isolated citations from the *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* and two from the first *Epistula*. Lastly, three additional citations have not been identified.⁵

As for the translations from which the Latin citations are taken, we can safely conclude that the reference work is the *translatio nova* by John the Saracen (c. 12th century); though at times Eckhart mentions the translation by Eriugena, he never refers to the translation by Robert Grosseteste. Three further citations have Thomas Aquinas as their intermediary.

More precisely, as far as the *De divinis nominibus* is concerned, two citations come from Aquinas, the third follows the translation of Eriugena, a fourth is formulated in accordance with both translations, and seven of them comply with John the Saracen's version; as to the *De caelesti hierarchia*, one citation derives again from Aquinas, three from Eriugena's translation and one from the Saracen's; in the *De ecclesiastica hierarchia*, the source is always Eriugena's translation, while for the *De mystica theologia* and the *Epistulae*, it is John the Saracen's translation. Indeed, the citations are uniformly distributed over all of Eckhart's works, in particular:

Latin works: One citation in *Prologus in opus propositionum*; two in *Expositio libri Genesis*; one in *Sermones et Lectiones super Ecclesiastici*; five in *Expositio libri Sapientiae*; four in *Expositio libri Exodi*; ten in *Expositio s. Evangelii sec. Iohannem*; three in *Liber parabolarum Genesis*; nine in *Sermones* XL, 2, XXVII, 3 (two citations), VI, 1, XXXIV, 1, including here the *Sermo die b. Augustini Parisius habitus* (2 citations) and the *Sermo Paschalis* of 1924 (2 citations); one in *Processus contra mag. Eckhardum* n. 48 (Proc. Col. II n. 91–99).

⁵ For the complete list of the citations, see E. Rubino, "Dâ von sprichet der liehte Dionysius, Eckhart e Dionigi Areopagita," in *Studi sulle fonti di Meister Eckhart*, ed. L. Sturlese (Fribourg: 2008), 113–33.

The quantitative data are rather surprising: on 62 occasions Eckhart explicitly has recourse to the authority of Dionysius, although he does not always cite him by name. A truly remarkable parsimony, considering that, for example, the *De anima* is explicitly cited 180 times,⁶ Augustine's *De Trinitate* has over 200 citations,⁷ with an additional 148 citations from Avicenna.⁸

Eckhart quotes brief passages from Dionysius that he sometimes tends to re-elaborate and interpret. Here are two examples in this regard:

1.

Eckhart, LW III, 160, 2	De divinis nominibus 2, 9
Unde Hierotheus didicit divina patiendi, non discendo ab extra, ut ait Dionysius	Haec autem et a nobis in aliis suffi- cienter dicta sunt, et a nobili duce in theologicis ipsius stoichiosibus laudata sunt valde supernaturaliter. (Saracenus)

2.

Eckhart, LW I/1, 565, 1	De divinis nominibus 4, 32
Et hoc est quod Dionysius dicit quod bonum hominis est secundum rationem vivere, malum vero praeter rationem.	[Cited in Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa theologiae</i>]: In actibus autem humanis bonum et malum dicitur per comparationem ad rationem: quia, ut Dionysius dicit, 4 cap. <i>De div. Nom.</i> , bonum hominis est <i>Secundum rationem esse</i> , malum autem quod est <i>praeter rationem</i> . ⁹

This last passage which Eckhart attributes to Dionysius is significant for two reasons: on the one hand, it is the most recurrent citation, repeated, in fact, seven times; on the other, the formulation *secundum rationem vivere* does not belong to the Dionysian *Corpus* but rather, is taken from

⁶ A. Beccarisi, "Aristoteles... der h chste under den meistern": Eckhart e il *De anima* di Aristotele, in *Studi sulle fonti di Meister Eckhart*, ed. L. Sturlese (Fribourg: 2008), 11–37.

⁷ G. Pellegrino, "Als  ist hie sant Augustinus gelichet einem guldrinen vasse": Eckhart e il *De Trinitate* di Agostino, in *Studi sulle fonti di Meister Eckhart I*, (Fribourg: 2008), 39–70.

⁸ Alessandro Palazzo, "Es spricht gar ein h her meister": Eckhart e Avicenna, in *Studi sulle fonti di Meister Eckhart*, ed. Loris Sturlese (Fribourg: 2008), 71–95.

⁹ *Summa theologiae* 1–2, a. 5 (Turin: 90).

Aquinas' *Summa theologiae* 1–2, q.18, a.5 and its contents clearly refer to books II and VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

2. THE DIONYSIAN THEMES IN ECKHART

Let us consider now, in brief, the Dionysian themes taken up by Eckhart.

Through the citations taken from the *De divinis nominibus*, the idea can be discerned, according to the Dominican Master, of a God as cause and principle of all things, as a substantial and over-substantial Good who dispenses his goodness to all beings, who makes everything exist; a God, who, because of his goodness, cannot but be productive.¹⁰

The union between man and God is defined through five divine names: Good, Light, Love, Peace, Holiness.

Good is the first name to be considered, insofar as it is the cause of all that exists and does not exist. Divine Light is that which illuminates the whole of the universe, as the rays of the sun illuminate all men and all the other things, reaching each and every place, even the most hidden; light awakens love for God and guides his creatures to Him.¹¹ The theme of light, in particular of the thearchic ray, is very common; we will also find it as one of the themes from the citations of the *De caelesti hierarchia*. Divine Love is an ecstatic love since it does not allow lovers to belong to themselves but only to the beloved.¹² Thus, Love, as with Light, by overflowing in accordance with the principle of emanation, moves man closer to God. And so too Peace is a principle of union, which, in harmony, recomposes the multitude of parts into a total unity and puts an end to the internal war of the universe.¹³ Lastly, it is the name of Holiness which is cited, representing for Dionysius one of the names used by the Holy Scriptures

¹⁰ "Et sic verbum dei patris est omnium 'exsistentium substantia' et omnium 'vivendum vita' et 'omnis substantiae et vitae principium est et causa,' secundum Dionysius *De divinis nominibus*." LW V, 92, 1.

"Est tamen locutio emphatica, commendas dei bonitatem et amorem, qui se toto bonus est per essentiam, quae bonitas non sinit ipsum sine germine esse, ut dicit Dionysius." LW V, 341, 5.

"Et Dionysius *De divinis nominibus* dicit bonum se extendere 'ad existentia et non-existentia;' bonum autem, utpote finis et prima causarum omnium, deus est, et ipse solus." LW III, 199, 11.

¹¹ "Dionysius 4 c. *De divinis nominibus* dicit quod 'lux illa fuit lux solis.'" LW I/I, 231, 8.

¹² "quod secundum Dionysium amor exstasim facit ponens amantem extra se et in amatum suum." LW IV, 340, 14.

¹³ "Sant Dionysius sprichet: 'der götliche vride durchvert und ordent und endet alliu dinc; und entæte der vride des niht, sô zervlüzzen alliu dinc und enhæten keine ordnung.'" DW II, 595, 4.

to indicate God, Saint of saints, King of kings, Lord of lords, God of gods. These characteristics indicate, in turn, the qualities which created beings derive from them. In Eckhart, Holiness represents divine purity.¹⁴

If Good is the cause of all things, of that which exists as of that which does not, then where does evil come from? If the angel is the proper manifestation of God, then where do demons come from and which characteristics do they have? These questions, formulated in the *De divinis nominibus* by Dionysius,¹⁵ must have interested Eckhart as well, given that, more than once, he insists that the angels are nothing but the manifestations of the hidden light, *imago Dei*, *ein bilde gotes*, pure and clearest reflection, immaculate and uncorrupted.¹⁶ According to him, angels move following a circular motion, thereby straying away from the created beings. Once the union of all angelic powers is reformed, they move in the direction of that which has no principle and no end, and which remains one and the same beyond all beings.¹⁷ Demons too, Eckhart again reminds us, have received and maintained their integral and most splendid nature.¹⁸ And what is evil for created beings and what is good? For man, evil, this time according to Eckhart's own elaboration, consists in "*praeter vel contra rationem esse aut vivere*."¹⁹ Thus, in a reappraisal of Eckhart's citations from the *De divinis nominibus*, the central themes concern, on the one hand, the union of man and God, saint of saints, of such a purity that "*ab omni immunditia libera et perfecta et omnino immaculata*,"²⁰ full of an overflowing goodness; on the other, the opposition of good and evil.

Both these themes are taken up again through the citations from the *De caelesti hierarchia*, the second most quoted work by Eckhart. The central

¹⁴ "sanctitas est ab omni immunditia libera et perfecta et omnino immaculata munditia." LW IV, 295, 7. See Appendix, 9.

¹⁵ Dionysius, *De div. nom.* c. 4. §§ 20–35.

¹⁶ "angelus, ut ait Dionysius, est imago dei, manifestatio occulti luminis, speculum etc." LW IV, 250, 3. "Dionysius spricht: ein engel ist ein spiegel âne vleben, geliutert ûf das hœhste, der in sich enfæhet den widerslak götliches liehtes." DW III, 353, 2.

"Ein meister spricht, 'der engel sî ein bilde gotes.'" DW III, 334, 5.

¹⁷ "daz wort, daz sant Dionysius spricht über daz wort sant Pauls, dâ er spricht: ir sint vil, die alle loufent nâch der krône und enwirt doch niht dan einem—alle krefte der sêle loufent nâch der krône und enwirt doch aleine dem wesene—hie spricht Dionysius: der louf enist niht anders dan ein abekêren von allen créâtûren und sich vereinigen in die ungeschaffenheit." DW V, 427, 7.

¹⁸ "Propter quod Dionysius dicit in daemonibus splendidissima naturalia remanescunt." LW II, 479, 4.

¹⁹ "Et hoc est quod Dionysius dicit quod bonum hominis est secundum rationem vivere, malum vero praeter rationem." LW I/I, 565, 1.

²⁰ "sanctitas est ab omni immunditia libera et perfecta et omnino immaculata munditia." LW IV, 295, 7.

point of interest of the work, as is well known, consists in the explanation for the necessity of a hierarchical order which enables human beings to reach God through the imitation of the angels, the divine messengers.²¹ It is in this context that we find Eckhart's citations referring to the natural disposition of the superior orders of the hierarchy to tend towards the inferior orders, and vice versa. Eckhart takes up this relation of reciprocity through a specific reference to Chapter 8 of the Dionysian work.²² On a number of occasions, Eckhart discusses the angelic powers, confirming that they are infinitely superior in number to the created beings and that their task is to communicate divine manifestations to human beings, so as to guide them towards God.²³ Eckhart makes, subsequently, five more references to the specific characteristics of angels, insisting on their particular purity and similarity to God.²⁴ He takes stock of the Dionysian doctrine according to which the angels' activity as messengers of the divine manifestations is articulated into three different and consecutive moments: purification, illumination, and perfection.²⁵ One of the divine manifestations communicated by the angels is light,²⁶ which also has an anagogical function for the soul in virtue of its steering created beings to the contemplation of God.²⁷

²¹ Dionysius the Areopagite in Dionigi Areopagita, *Tutte le opere*, trans. P. Scazzoso (Milan: 1981), 71–75.

²² "Dionysius spricht, daz diu obersten dinc ergiezent sich ûf diu nidersten und diu nidersten in diu obersten und vereinent sich in den obersten." DW III, 430, 1.

²³ "Et hoc est quod manifeste dicit Dionysius quod 'multitudo angelorum excedit numerum omnium corporalium.' Excedit quidem numerum, utpote sine numero e super numerum, nec, sicut plurimi male exponunt 'excedere numerum corporalium,' quia sint plures numero." LW II, 450, 2.

"Quod autem additur omnibus mobilibus mobilior, ratio est, quia ad intima et ultima penetrat actio divina, infra octavo; 'attingit a fine usque ad finem fortiter.' Hanc quidem expositionem innuit breviter Thomas p. I q. 9 a. 1, ex Dionysio confirmans." LW II, 465, 1.

"Dionysius spricht von dem gewîheten vürstentuome der engel, dar inne ist götlich ordenunge und götlich werk und götlich wisheit und götlich glichnisse oder götlich wârheit, als ez müglich ist.—Sant Dionysius spricht: 'ist, daz daz götliche lieht in mich schînet, sô muoz ez bewunden sîn, als mîn sêle bewunden ist.'" DW II, 119, 4; 603, 1.

"Sant Dionysius spricht, 'daz engelischiu natûre ist als vil als diu offenunge götliches liehtes.'" DW II, 616, 8.

²⁴ "Dionysius spricht von dem gewîheten vürstentuome der engel, dar inne ist götlich ordenunge und götlich werk und götlich wisheit und götlich glichnisse oder götlich wârheit, als ez müglich ist." DW II, 119, 4.

²⁵ "Dionysius spricht, daz der engel habe drêrleie werk. Daz êrste: er veget, daz ander: er liuhtet, daz dritte: er volbrînget" DW III, 354, 6.

²⁶ "Sant Dionysius spricht, 'daz engelischiu natûre ist als vil als diu offenunge götliches liehtes.'" DW II, 616, 8.

²⁷ "Et Dionysius: 'impossibile est nobis lucere divinum radium nisi varietate circumvelatum.'" LW III, 62, 8; 275, 3; 650, 1.

Before moving on to the elements of mystic theology acknowledged by Eckhart and emphasized, as we have mentioned, by many commentators, let us note that the concept of union between man and God is taken up again, this time from the *De ecclesiastica hierarchia*, in the form of a *synaxis*, the reunion between man and God.²⁸ It remains for us to understand to what extent Eckhart properly acknowledged the theme of negative theology or, indeed, the general themes of mystic theology. As has been mentioned, only eight citations come from the *De mystica theologia*, of which one is found in the Latin works and four in the vernacular writings. This fact seems to be worth reflecting on for the purposes of reaching a fitting interpretation of the role Dionysius has in the works of Eckhart. Sure enough, we find the well-known theme of the luminous mist of silence²⁹ and of the possibility of knowing and speaking to God only through negation.³⁰ We also find again the theme of the union, which Dionysius brings about here through “the attentive exercise to mystic contemplations and the abandoning of the senses and of any intellectual operation”.³¹ This is the path—says Dionysius—to elevate oneself to the super-substantial ray of divine darkness.³²

Eckhart extracts a citation precisely from the passage in which these mystic characteristics of the union of man and God are described:

²⁸ “Unde Dionysius ubi supra, cur dicatur hoc sacra<mentum> communio vel synaxis, dicit: ‘unaquaque sacra perfectiva actio partitas nostras vitas in uniformem deificationem colligit et divisarum deiformem complicationem et communionem donat.’ Unde si hoc facit quaevis sacra actio, longe [5] facit hoc sacra<mentum>. Unde nomen ‘communio’ merito datur huic sacramento.” LW V, 147, 1.

²⁹ “Et hoc est quod ait Dionysius c. 1 De mystica theologia: ‘simplicia et abscondita et inconvertibilia theologiae mysteria cooperta sunt secundum supersplendentem occulte docti silentii caliginem in obscurissimo superclarissimum supersplendere facientem.” LW II, 196, 8.

³⁰ “Dâ von sprichet der liehte Dionysius, wâ er von gote schribet, dâ sprichet er: er ist über wesen, er ist über leben, er ist über lieht; er engibet im noch diz noch daz, und er meinet, daz er sî neizwaz, daz gar verre dar über sî. Der iht sihet oder vellet iht in dîn bekennen, daz enist got niht; dâ von niht, wan er noch diz noch daz enist.” DW III, 223, 3. “Nû sprichet sant Dionysius: nein niht, er ist über wîse. Er sprichet, daz er ein lieht sî. Nein niht, er ist über lieht. Er sprichet, daz er ein wesen sî. Nein niht, er ist über wesen. Er sprichet, daz er ein êwicheit sî. Nein niht, er ist über êwicheit. Allez daz man gesprechen mac, daz enist got niht.” DW IV, 188, 156.

³¹ Dionigi Areopagita, *Tutte le opere*, 406.

³² Dionigi Areopagita, *Tutte le opere*, 406–07.

De mystica theologia c. 1 § 1/997B
transl. Ioh. Sarraceni, Dion. 567,
2–569, 1

Eckhart, *Pred.* 101 St., DW IV, 359,
146–360, 149

Tu autem, amice Thimothee, circa mysticas visiones forti contritione et sensus derelinque et intellectuales operationes, et omnia sensibilia et intelligibilia et omnia existentia et non existentia, et sicut est possibile, ignote consurge ad eius unionem qui est super omnem substantiam et cognitionem. Et enim excessu tui ipsius et omnium irretentibili absolute, et munde ad supersubstantialem divinarum tenebrarum radium, cuncta auferrens et a cunctis absolutus sursum ageris.

Hie zuo mânete Dionysius sînen jûnger Timotheum und sprach: "lieber mîn sun Timotheê, dû solt mit umbegekêrten sinnen dich erswingen über dich selber und über alle krefte, über redelicheit und über vernunft, über werk und wîse und wesen in die verborgene stille dünsternisse, ûf daz dû komest in ein bekantnisse des unbekanten übergotteten gottes." Ez muoz ein entziehen sîn von allen dingen.

However, the citation cannot but make us wonder why the most precisely mystic of expressions ("*circa mysticas visiones*") does not feature in it. What is left is the concept of *unitio*, which is "above and beyond the virtues of the soul (*krefte*)," "above and beyond reason and the intellect (*über redelicheit und über vernunft*)."³³ Curiously enough, however, the concept is formulated in terms of knowledge (*bekantnisse*), though it is of divine "darkness" (*dünsternisse*). Eckhart is therefore quoting from the treatise containing the elaboration of the mystic theology of Dionysius, citing from the "mystic" chapter of the treatise, and citing, what is more, the passage in which the mystic union is brought to completeness, accepting also the idea of a union above and beyond all sensible and intelligible things, and yet omitting precisely those expressions which unequivocally confer to the union between man and God that mystic sense about which Kurt Ruh, for example, speaks. Such a choice, which could hardly be accidental, seems to confirm the idea that Eckhart's endeavor is mostly directed to "explain philosophically . . . the true sense of the relation between God and man."³³ A union which, though it is an internal act³⁴ transcending from the images, a detachment which leads to the poverty of the spirit and

³³ L. Sturlese, "Mistica o filosofia? A proposito della dottrina dell'immagine di Meister Eckhart," *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* 12 (1992), 64.

³⁴ V. Lossky, "La théologie négative dans la doctrine des Denys l'Aréopagite," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 28 (1939), 204–21.

towards perfect nudity,³⁵ is nevertheless always tied down to a "bekantnisse," to a knowledge beyond rationality which has but little to do with "visions, the hearing of voices or privileged experiences of divinity."³⁶

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this overview can be summarized into the following points.

1. The translations Eckhart refers to are the translation by John the Saracen as for the *De divinis nominibus* and the *De mystica theologia*; and the translation by Eriugena for the *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* and the *De caelesti hierarchia*; while for three other citations, his source is the commentary of Thomas Aquinas.

2. The implicit and explicit citations from the Dionysian *Corpus* do not appear to be as numerous as one would expect. The meagerness of the number of Dionysian citations in Eckhart appears to be all the more significant considering that in the pseudo-Eckhartian treatises in High Middle German, as for example in *Von der sêle werdikeit und eigenschaft* (ten citations), *Von der übervart der gotheit* (15 citations), "*Sant Johannes spricht ich sach daz wort in got*" (12 citations), "*Die drei persône geschuofen die creature*" (15 citations), the number of Dionysian citations is far greater. Taken together, these even exceed the total number of times Dionysius is mentioned in the authentic Latin and German works: 66 as opposed to 62.³⁷

V. Lossky, *Théologie négative et connaissance de Dieu chez Maître Eckhart* (Paris: 1960), 17–22, 28–42, 60–68.

³⁵ A. de Libera, *La Mystique Rhénane*, 231–316.

³⁶ L. Sturlese, "Mistica o filosofia?" 64.

³⁷ The treatises mentioned here are all published in *Deutsche Mystiker des 14. Jahrhunderts*, 2: Meister Eckhart, ed. F. Pfeiffer, (Leipzig: 1857; repr. facs. Aalen: 1962). In addition, one citation in each treatise has been found: I. *Von den XII nutzen unsers herren lîchames*, II. *Von der edelkeit der sêle*, VII. *dîu zeichen eines wârhaften grundes*, two citations in X. *Von armuot des geistes*, four in XIII. *Von dem anefluzze des vaters*, five in the *Liber positionum*. For more precise indications in this regard, see V. Honemann, (Pseudo-) Dionysius, in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon*, vol. 2, ed. K. Ruh (Berlin: 1980), 158–65. See also F. Löser, *Meister Eckhart in Melk, Studien zum Redaktor Lienhart Peuger. Mit einer Edition des Traktats "Von der sel wirdichait vnd eigenschaft"*, (Texte und Textgeschichte) 48 (Tübingen: 1999), 10. Dionysius is even present in the so-called *Gaesdonckesche Traktate* (on which see A. Beccarisi, *supra*, 13, note 11), in the Nuremberg manuscript published by F. Jostes, *Meister Eckhart und seine jûnger*, with a glossary by P. Schmitt and an afterword by K. Ruh (Berlin: 1972), (33 citations), and in the unpublished

3. Most of the citations are not made from the *De mystica theologia* but from the *De divinis nominibus*.

4. Eckhart's reading is selective: some of the themes present in Dionysius are given significant consideration in the citations, while some, on the other hand, are not addressed at all. Eckhart extracts from the *De divinis nominibus* the theme of the opposition between good and evil and the conception of the angels as manifestations and messengers of God. Of the divine names considered by Dionysius to define the relation between man and God, only five are taken up: Good, Light, Love, Peace, and Holiness. From the *De caelesti hierarchia* comes the idea that there is a hierarchical structure of the angelical world, but the hierarchical vision of the community of men is completely abandoned, and in particular that of the ecclesiastical community, which constitutes the specific contents of the work.³⁸ Finally, from the *De mystica theologia*, Eckhart takes up the well-known theme of the luminous mist, the silence, and the negative theology.

5. The dominant theme which the Dionysian citations have in common in the works of Eckhart is that of the union of man and God. Indeed, Eckhart leaves aside all the sacraments analyzed by Dionysius as being the expression of the hierarchical order of the ecclesiastical community, with the exception of the one representing the *synaxis* between man and God: the Eucharist.

6. The excessive authoritative weight, in Eckhart's works, which marks out the *De divinis nominibus* in comparison with the other treatises, in particular the *De mystica theologia*, leads us to think that Eckhart's reading and the use he makes of the themes and passages from Dionysius do not corroborate a mystic interpretation of the union of man and God. Rather, they belong to the broader Eckhartian enterprise of offering a philosophical doctrine formulated in rational terms.³⁹ It is indeed in the *De divinis nominibus* that we find the Dionysian attempt to elaborate an "irrefutable" theology from the point of view of reason, capable of conciliating the philosophical reasons of Neoplatonism and the demands of

Geistbuch, the publication of which is forthcoming (edited by D. Gottschall). However, the "extra-Eckhartian" dissemination of Dionysius would deserve to be considered in a separate study.

³⁸ See E. P. Mahoney, *Pseudo-Dionysius's Conception of Metaphysical Hierarchy and its Influence on Medieval Philosophy*, ed. T. Boiadjev, G. Kapriev, and A. Speer (Turnhout: 2000), 429–75.

³⁹ L. Sturlese, "Mistica o filosofia?" 51, 60.

the Christian religion.⁴⁰ In this work, the relation of God to man is not so much traced down to the possibility of a final “unio mystica,”⁴¹ as towards a causal metaphysical relation—clearly of Proclean origin—of the One with respect to the multiple.

⁴⁰ Dionigi Areopagita, *Tutte le opere*, 7–52, 60. Dionysius himself confirms this in his letters, see in particular Ep. 6 and 7.

⁴¹ K. Ruh, *Meister Eckhart*, 47–59.

PART TWO

INTRODUCTION TO PART TWO: MEISTER ECKHART AS PREACHER AND THEOLOGIAN

Paul A. Dietrich

The following six chapters address three clusters of issues centered around the twin offices held by Meister Eckhart which have received considerable attention over the past several decades of Eckhart research. In his role as a Dominican priest and preacher, Eckhart offered talks of spiritual instruction, preached sermons in the vernacular, and performed administrative tasks in his order. He was a *Lebemeister*. As a theologian, a *magister* at the University of Paris, he composed works of Latin scholastic theology (*Opus Tripartitum*, *Quaestiones Parisienses*) as well as Latin biblical commentaries. He was a *Lesemeister*, a master of the page.

The chapters in Part Two fall naturally into three groupings: Eckhart's biblical exegesis and vernacular preaching (Duclow, Milem); Eckhart's theology and its sources in Judaeo-Arabic rationalism with special attention to the influence of Moses Maimonides (Enders, Schwartz); and finally, Eckhart and medieval women's spirituality with particular attention to the French Beguine, Marguerite Porete (Wegener, Marler).

LATIN BIBLICAL EXEGESIS AND VERNACULAR PREACHING

Professors Duclow and Milem have both published important studies on the topics of their respective contributions, which recognize the role of the Bible and Eckhart's exegetical and homiletic activities as a crucial component of his overarching project.¹

Donald Duclow reminds us that Eckhart's Latin commentaries on Exodus, Wisdom, and John are "at once rich in speculative themes, and difficult to place within medieval exegetical tradition." Indeed, historians of exegesis "have not been kind" to Eckhart. However, only when we cease to privilege the often narrow, historicist concerns of modern

¹ Don Duclow, "Meister Eckhart on the Book of Wisdom: Commentary and Sermons," *Traditio* 43 (1987): 215–35; Bruce Milem, *The Unspoken Word: Negative Theology in Meister Eckhart's German Sermons* (Washington, D.C.: 2002). See also *Lectura Eckhardi* I–III, ed. G. Steer and L. Sturlese (Stuttgart: 1998, 2003, 2008).

and contemporary exegesis (and the effort to identify their antecedents in the past), and recognize the richness of past traditions of the spiritual senses (e.g. the *sensus plenior*), are we able to read medieval authors with renewed interest and understanding. Yet even within the context of medieval scholastic and monastic exegetical practice, Meister Eckhart's method remains distinctive, even idiosyncratic, offering glosses on individual verses with no effort at comprehensiveness. Eckhart approaches the biblical texts with a "binocular vision"—at once pastoral/homiletic and scholastic/metaphysical—concerned with the proclamation of God's saving work found in the narrative, yet grounded in a philosophical foundation of the metaphysics of the transcendentals.

In Duclow's reading, Eckhart's bible is a "hypertext" (see his discussion of Wouter Goris)—a complex system of references pointing beyond the text. Eckhart's sources include the traditional fonts of scholastic biblical hermeneutics, the *Glossa ordinaria* and Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, but the influence of Thomas and Maimonides signal that something more radical is unfolding. His distinction between the evident or literal sense and the concealed or parabolic meaning fits into the medieval doctrine of the spiritual senses of Scripture derived from the figural readings of patristic allegoresis. In Duclow's words, Eckhart's "eternist" (Henri de Lubac's term) perspective yields a "mystical hermeneutics" with a "fusion of speculative theological and exegetic horizons" that is reminiscent of patristic and earlier medieval monastic practices of *lectio*. He includes an instructive quotation from Bernard McGinn, "Eckhart dehistoricizes and decontextualizes texts into sentences, fragments that he recombines with other passages in a dense web of inter-textuality through a system of cross-referencing."²

Bruce Miley's "Meister Eckhart's Vernacular Preaching" provides a clear analysis of Eckhart's sermon style and subject matter followed by an extended analysis of Sermon 48. He begins by observing that, especially in the vernacular sermons, the reader is struck by the "verve, vivid imagery, dramatic phrasing and philosophical abstraction." Thematically, the Dominican preacher draws upon and indeed creates a rich vocabulary of images to explicate the hearer's relation to God. The appropriation of the patristic idea of the birth of the Word/Son in the soul and its revalorization and deepening in Eckhart's treatment may be taken as exemplary.

² Bernard McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart* (New York: 2001), 27.

Attention is drawn to the famous passage in Sermon 53 where Eckhart announces the four themes of his preaching: detachment, the in-formation of the soul in God, the soul's innate nobility, and the purity of the divine nature. Here Eckhart, to paraphrase Bix Beiderbecke, "puts the cookies on the bottom shelf so that everyone can reach them." Milem expands on these themes associated with union with God in the vernacular sermons: (1) detachment or "living without a why;" (2) the language of "nobility" or God as a function of intellect or power (or faculty) of the soul; (3) God in the soul in a more inward or intimate way using the image of "little castle," "single one," or "ground of the soul;" (4) creatures understood as pure nothing, and, finally; (5) the union of word and being.

In his treatment of Eckhart's homiletic style, Bruce Milem attends to matters of voice, language, and stylistic devices. Eckhart's sermons are performances indebted to his views on the inexhaustibility of Scripture (D. Duclow) as well as liturgical contexts governed in part by the Dominican missal. In the Meister's mystical hermeneutics (N. Largier), the sermons function as an example of apophatic discourse (M. Sells) as well as appellative speech (B. Hasebrink). The common denominator of these various emphases in Eckhart's preaching style entail the auditor being drawn into the performance of the sermon and forced to assist in the construction of the meaning of the words of the sermon for himself/herself. "Interpretation, however extravagant, is itself part of the literal meaning and fabric of scripture." In Sermon 48 Eckhart combines his speculative insights with simple images of spark and desert, eye and wood. The principal theme is detachment and the soul's union with God and journey "into the simple ground, into the still desert." Milem understands the sermon to be an event or performance in which Eckhart offers reasons for practicing detachment and explores his concept of the union with God based on knowing within the context of negative theology.

THEOLOGY AND SOURCES

In "Meister Eckhart's Understanding of God," Markus Enders undertakes to provide an ambitious and comprehensive chronological sketch of the basic features of Eckhart's understanding of God.

In the *Counsels on Discernment* or *Discourses of Instruction* (*Reden der Unterscheidung*), Enders finds Eckhart stressing God's essential goodness through the (Trinitarian) self-communication of love. Referring to the ancient Platonic philosophical adage of "bonum est diffusivum sui,"

Eckhart emphasizes God's self-bestowal and self-communication. In the first Parisian *Quaestio* Eckhart asserts the primacy of intellect over Being and identifies God as intellect and knowing. "The mode of this eternal, pre-existent antecedent possession of all things by God is the mode of absolute thinking." Eckhart's speculative exploration continues in his "Exodus metaphysics," his treatment of God's self-naming in Exodus 3:14, "Ego sum qui sum." For Enders this is an example of God's reflexive self-affirmation and "negation of negation."

In the *Prologus generalis in Opus tripartitum*, Eckhart defines God as Being and offers a metaphysics of the transcendentals. A more fundamental assertion, however, is God's Unity—"Deus unus est." God's omnipresence, omni-unity, infinite, radical simplicity, and pure intellect are all ways of referring to his absolute unity. Unity is the proper, essential name of God. In his Latin works Eckhart has invoked traditional sources including Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, Thomas Aquinas, as well as Proclus, Macrobius, the Cappadocians, Boethius, Eriugena, Anselm, Bernard of Clairvaux, and the *Liber de causis*. The source *primus inter pares* on this topic, however, is Moses Maimonides. For Enders, "Eckhart receives and transforms not only Maimonides' strict concept of the absolute unity of God, but also the foundations of this concept in Maimonides' theory of intellect."

In his reading of Eckhart's Latin *Commentary on Exodus* and Latin Sermon XXIX, Enders expands on God's unity in reference to Eckhart's distinction between "Godhead" (the essential unity of the divine intellect) and "God" (the Trinitarian mode of self-knowledge and of Being of this absolute intellect). Finally, the unity of God and the unlimitedness, undifferentiatedness, fullness, and unicity of God are found in Eckhart's *Commentary on Wisdom* and in Sermon XXXVII. In all of these works, according to Enders, "By far the most important traditional source for Eckhart's theory of the absolute unity of the first principle is the metaphysics of unity and the radical negative theology of . . . Moses Maimonides."

Enders' chapter serves as a complement to Yossef Schwartz's "Meister Eckhart and Moses Maimonides: From Judaeo-Arabic Rationalism to Christian Mysticism." Just as Kurt Flasch's recent study³ has renewed interest in the Arab sources of Eckhart's thought, Schwartz offers a fascinating

³ Kurt Flasch, *Meister Eckhart: Die Geburt der "Deutschen Mystik" aus der arabischen Philosophie* (Munich: 2006). On Eckhart's metaphysics of unity, see Wouter Goris, *Einheit als Prinzip und Ziel: Versuch über die Einheitsmetaphysik des Opus tripartitum Meister Eckharts* (Leiden: 1977).

argument for the influence of Arabic *falsafa* (Alfarabi, Avicenna, Averroes, Maimonides) on Latin scholasticism, specifically Eckhart's indebtedness to and ultimate liberation from Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*. Written in Arabic in Cairo in the 1190s, the *Guide* was translated into Hebrew twice before 1240, the date of the full Latin translation. Schwartz argues that the *Guide* was most influential from 1240 to 1280, especially among Dominicans, and preeminently in terms of arguments concerning the eternity of the world, proofs of God's existence, and problems of prophecy, providence, rationality, and the immortality of the soul. Schwartz notes, as have others, Eckhart's especially positive reception of Maimonides. The Jewish philosopher is cited 119 times in Eckhart's commentaries, ahead of all other non-Christian and Christian sources except Augustine and Aristotle. Schwartz argues for the Maimonidean hermeneutical framework of the *Opus tripartitum*, including the influence of RaMBaM's esotericism. "Eckhart's program can be seen as part of the systematic vernacularization of Arab elitist intellectual religiosity." Eckhart is particularly interested in Maimonides' extreme unitarian metaphysics and negative theology within the context of the theological language of divine attributes.

In an intriguing epilogue, Schwartz turns to mysticism as an ethical imperative in the two authors. Maimonides certainly opened the worlds of the hermeneutics of the Hebrew Bible and of Arab rationalism for the German Dominican. In Schwartz's words, Maimonides helped Eckhart in this "ambitious task" of letting "Aristotle, Moses and Christ preach the same gospel."⁴

MEDIEVAL WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY (MARGUERITE PORETE)

The last two chapters in Part Two both focus on Eckhart's relation to medieval women's spirituality through an extended treatment of the same figure, Marguerite Porete. Although Lydia Wegener's "Eckhart and the World of Women's Spirituality in the Context of the 'Free Spirit' and Marguerite Porete" and J.C. Marler's "*The Mirror of Simple Souls*: The Ethics of Margaret Porette" follow quite different paths, they have in common a revisionist agenda in terms of the woman most often compared and contrasted to the Meister.

⁴ Meister Eckhart, *Expositio Sancti evangelii secundum Iohannem* 185; LW III, 155, 5–7; "Idem ergo est quod docet Moyses, Christus et Philosophus, solum quantum ad modum differens, scilicet ut credibile, probabile sive versimile et veritas."

A number of 13th- and 14th-century religious women, usually identified as Beguines, have been associated with Meister Eckhart either as sources or contemporaries, including Mechthild of Magdeburg, Hadewijch of Brabant, Hadewijch II (or Pseudo-Hadewijch), and Marguerite Porete. The putative or possible connections between these women and Eckhart, and more generally, the potential interactions between “Beguine spirituality” and the Rhineland Dominican Albertist school have been matters of growing speculation in recent years.⁵ Mechthild and Hadewijch can be fairly reliably placed in the mid-13th century. Only Marguerite Porete significantly overlaps Eckhart chronologically, especially considering their residence in Paris at times in the first decade of the 14th century. Eckhart lived with Marguerite’s Dominican inquisitor and presumably knew the details of her trials and the general content of her *Mirror*. A number of scholars have recognized parallels and similarities between the language and themes of the condemned Beguine and the German Dominican.

It is to Lydia Wegener’s credit that she puts these assumptions of the links between Eckhart and the medieval women mystics to the test. She also includes a discussion of the 14th-century German Dominican nuns’ *vitae* and *Sister-books*.⁶ Her contribution essays a close look at the evidence of Eckhart’s personal relation to Beguines and enclosed Dominican religious women. While older efforts to compare male and female medieval authors have occasionally foundered on stereotypical dichotomies between “intellectual” male spirituality and “affective” female spirituality, Wegener avoids this hazard while acknowledging that Eckhart seemed unmoved by the Passion mysticism and extremes of ascetical self-mortification so prevalent among the Dominican sisters (and Eckhart’s own male disciple, Henry Suso). She questions whether there is *any* evidence that Eckhart interacted directly with women religiously. Her skepticism regarding Eckhart’s preaching to women seems to run counter to the evidence of marginalia, in the form of mystical verse about Eckhart’s teachings, found in Dominican *Nonnenviten* and *Schwesternbücher*, transcriptions of sermons, and the specific comments in Eckhart’s sermons directed against the cultivation of ecstatic states and an undue interest in “jubilieren” and the “jubilus.” Wegener also documents the problems associated with historiographical essentialism and reification regarding the “heresy” of the

⁵ See the essays collected in Bernard McGinn (ed.), *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics* (New York: 1997).

⁶ On the knowledge of Eckhart among Dominican women see Judith Theben, *Die Mystische Lyrik des 14. Und 15. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: 2010).

“Free Spirit,” “Beguine mysticism,” and (medieval) “female mystical spirituality.” She refers to the decree “*Ad nostrum*” directed in the early 14th century against the “heresy” of the “Free Spirit”—a document that has been described by historians as a birth certificate without a baby.⁷ She offers a cautionary note to facile attempts to paint an elaborate connection between these male and female authors and her essay has much to offer even if some readers will not be able to follow her to her final conclusion that Eckhart’s knowledge of Marguerite Porete “is nothing but a fragile hypothesis . . . more a historiographical concept than a historical fact.”

In his somewhat querulous essay on the ethics of Marguerite Porete, J.C. Marler desires to redress certain slights directed towards a fellow scholar with whom he has co-authored several works dealing with Marguerite and the heresy of the Free Spirit. His account offers an interesting exercise in the fungible categories of “heresy,” “Gnosticism,” and related terms used by historians, as well as by philosophers and theologians. Ultimately, Marler is less interested in historical and theological usages of the terminology of “heresy” or “heretical” in Catholic parlance, than he is in the shifting valuations and meaning of “gnostic” and “gnosticism.” This can lead to a genuinely fruitful conversation given requisite acknowledgement of differences between these latter terms used as historical descriptors of 2nd- to 4th-century tendencies and movements in the religious traditions of the late antique Mediterranean basin and the same terms used as transhistorical philosophical or theological terminology identifying “perennial” themes over varying historical periods, especially in medieval and modern historiographical discourse. Contemporary philosophers of religion (including, prominently, a contributor to this volume, Cyril O’Regan)⁸ have utilized gnostic categories in a fruitful investigation of Western religious thought from Jacob Boehme to Schelling and Hegel. To apply this terminology to the author of *The Mirror of Simple Souls* requires a nuanced attention to the commonalities and distinctiveness of such discourse within a given historical context. The reader is invited to form his/her own opinion of the success of this last chapter in Part Two.

⁷ Robert Lerner, *The Heresy of the ‘Free Spirit,’* 2nd ed. (Notre Dame: 1997).

⁸ Cyril O’Regan, *Gnostic Return in Modernity* (New York: 2001).

MEISTER ECKHART'S LATIN BIBLICAL EXEGESIS

Donald F. Duclow

Eckhart's surviving works include major Latin commentaries on Genesis, Exodus, Wisdom, and the Gospel of John, as well as *Lectiones* on Ecclesiasticus and fragments of a commentary on the Song of Songs. Although many scholars have commented on these works, few have discussed them precisely *as exegesis*. For while these works' speculative riches make them indispensable for understanding his philosophy and theology, the very same riches make the commentaries difficult to place within the late medieval exegetical tradition. This essay will examine the scholarship on Eckhart's Latin exegetical writings, their methods and sources, and their relation to his other works and the wider exegetical tradition.

Historians of exegesis have not been kind to Eckhart. As C. Spicq and Beryl Smalley documented the increasing focus on Scripture's literal, historical sense that took hold in the 13th century, they noticed that Eckhart's densely speculative commentaries break this pattern and they judged him accordingly. Spicq states the basic complaint: "For Eckhart the sacred text is only an occasion for reflections and theological theses, and not the subject for a consideration penetrating to the meaning of its words;" by neglecting the literal sense, he leaves "without fruit the noteworthy effort of the thirteenth century."¹ According to Smalley, "Meister Eckhart may have been the Joachim of the fourteenth century."² Since she considers Joachim of Flora's work not to be "real exegesis," but "a *reductio ad absurdum* of the spiritual exposition" of Scripture and calls it "an attack of senile dementia,"³ her comparison puts Eckhart in dubious company. A third historian, Henri de Lubac, attempts a more balanced judgement. He criticizes Eckhart's "*éternisme*" as slighting salvation history, and places him in "the rationalist school" for reducing Genesis's third chapter to

¹ C. Spicq, *Esquisse d'une histoire de l'exégèse latine au moyen âge* (Paris: 1944), 333–34 [my translation].

² Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (1952; repr. Notre Dame, Ind.: 1964), 359.

³ Smalley, *Study of the Bible*, 286, 288–89.

myth.⁴ Yet noting that there is more to Scripture than history, de Lubac also appreciates Eckhart's focus on "some great, inexhaustible texts on God, the uncreated Word, and his created image, as well as on the elusive boundary of time and eternity."⁵

There is no disputing the historical anomalies in Eckhart's exegesis since he himself tells us how odd and controversial it is. He writes that his *Opus tripartitum* contains "unusual commentaries on many texts of both Testaments of Sacred Scripture, especially those matters which they [Eckhart's Dominican brothers] do not recall having heard or read elsewhere;" and some of these novel glosses "will appear strange, doubtful or false. But they will be judged otherwise if they are examined in a more learned and intelligent way."⁶ A few points will clarify his works' distinctive format and tone. Unlike his scholastic predecessors who commented on complete biblical books verse by verse—e.g. Thomas Aquinas's *Commentary on the Gospel of John*—Eckhart glosses only select verses. For instance, his commentary on the fourth Gospel presents a richly detailed account of the prologue (Jn 1:1–14) but omits nearly the entire passion narrative. As Spicq notes, Eckhart's glosses often become theological treatises, as when the phrase "Almighty is his name" (Ex. 15:3) initiates a long discussion about naming God.⁷

Nor are complaints about Eckhart's approach to the scriptural letter and history new. In 1326 his Cologne accusers noted a passage where Eckhart identifies the "parabolic" or figurative meaning with the literal or historical sense of Genesis 3: "the serpent is the sensitive faculty, the woman

⁴ Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale: Les quatre senses de L'Écriture* 2.2 (Paris: 1964), 489, 164.

⁵ De Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale*, 489 [my translation].

⁶ Eckhart, *Parisian Questions and Prologues*, trans. A. Maurer (Toronto: 1974), 80, 82 (Prol gen, LW I, 148–49 and 152, nn. 2 and 8). The critical edition of Eckhart's works is *Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, ed. Joseph Quint, Josef Koch, et al. (Stuttgart/Berlin: 1936–). Latin Works will be cited as LW, using the following abbreviations:

In Ex	<i>Expositio in Exodi</i>
In Gen I	<i>Expositio Libri Genesis</i>
In Gen II	<i>Liber Parabolarum Genesis</i>
In Ioh	<i>Expositio sancti Evangelii secundum Iohannem</i>
In Sap	<i>Expositio Libri Sapientiae</i>
Prol gen	<i>Prologus generalis in Opus tripartitum</i>
Prol op expos.	<i>Prologus in Opus expositionum</i>

References will be to the abbreviated title, followed by LW volume, page, and section number (n. or nn.).

⁷ Eckhart, In Ex, LW II, 32–78, nn. 27–78; trans. Bernard McGinn in *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, ed. B. McGinn (New York: 1986), 50–70.

the inferior reason, and the man the superior reason.”⁸ This figurative interpretation dates back to Augustine; but by taking it as the chapter’s literal sense concerning humanity’s creation and fall, Eckhart seems to undo the historical reality of Genesis, which had been affirmed by nearly all commentators since Augustine’s *De Genesi ad litteram*. Yet in replying to his accusers, Eckhart affirmed the truth of his gloss, adding “that is not to say that scripture is not true and is not to be explained in literal and historical fashion.”⁹ As this controversy indicates, Eckhart’s views on the Bible’s multiple meanings will require close attention. But first we must place the commentaries within Eckhart’s career and oeuvre.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY: BETWEEN PROPOSITIONS AND PREACHING?

Josef Koch has argued that the *Opus tripartitum* provides the framework for Eckhart’s exegetical works. The General Prologue outlines an ambitious project: a Book of Propositions, a Book of Questions, and a Book of Commentaries “subdivided according to the number and order of the books of the Old and New Testaments whose texts are expounded in it.”¹⁰ Except for the *Liber parabolorum Genesi*, the surviving commentaries fit comfortably within the third section, which was also to include a Book of Sermons on biblical texts. Koch then finds the biblical commentaries’ purpose in the audience for the *Opus*: the “zealous brethren” who, Eckhart says, urged him to write what they heard in his lectures, sermons, and discussions; and the “experienced reader” whom he asks to choose among his multiple explanations of principal texts and to probe more deeply the commentaries’ briefer glosses.¹¹ Addressing his Dominican students and brothers, Eckhart wrote the commentaries to assist them in their order’s core task—preaching. Koch thus discerns a twofold focus in his exegetical work: “It takes its meaning on the one hand from the philosophical foundation in the metaphysics of the transcendentals of the Book of Propositions, and on the other from the orientation toward the sermon as

⁸ Eckhart, In Gen II, LW II, 602–04, n. 136; trans. Bernard McGinn in Eckhart, *The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, ed. Edmund Colledge and B. McGinn (New York: 1981), 108. See *Processus contra mag. Echaridum* n. 46, in *Acta Echaridiana*, LW V, 210–11, nn. 31–32; and de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale* 2.2, 164.

⁹ Eckhart, *Responsio ad articulos sibi impositos* I, n. 48, LW V, 288; cited in Eckhart, *Essential Sermons*, 324, note 162.

¹⁰ Eckhart, *Parisian Questions*, 82; Prol gen, LW I, 151, n. 6.

¹¹ Eckhart, *Parisian Questions*, 79–80 and 105; Prol Gen, LW I, 138, n. 2; and Prol op exp II, LW I, 182, nn. 4–5; LW V, 182.

proclamation of God's word."¹² On this view, Eckhart's commentaries look two ways: toward the "propositions" of scholastic philosophy and theology, and toward preaching. The first is essential because for Eckhart the books of questions and commentaries so depend on the Book of Propositions that "without it they are of little use,"¹³ while the Dominican context and audience require the focus on preaching.

This binocular vision enables us to view Eckhart within the tradition of Dominicans who sought to tighten the fraying links between biblical commentary and academic theology, and who oriented their exegesis toward preaching. Surveying this tradition, Michèle Mulchahey writes that "The Dominicans . . . came to produce biblical commentaries as much with the preacher and *praedicatio* in mind as the schoolroom and *lectio*."¹⁴ For example, Hugh of Saint-Cher's *Postillae* developed "biblical distinctions" or "schemata, which outline a series of figurative interpretations for a word as it appears in different places in Scripture." Albert the Great worked Aristotle's physical science into his biblical commentaries, and Thomas Aquinas's *Catena aurea* gave preachers a "treasury of exegetical material, a chain of authorities."¹⁵ In light of his Dominican forebears, Eckhart's multiple glosses of individual words, his melding of physics with biblical commentary, and his generous lists of authorities look closer to standard Dominican practice than Smalley and Spicq would have us believe.

Koch's binocular vision also clarifies the commentaries' selective exegesis, as Eckhart chooses biblical passages which hold philosophical/theological interest, or which are useful for preaching because of their place in the lectionary and their moral and mystical possibilities. On both scores, it seems appropriate that he glosses the Book of Wisdom and Gospel of John—two speculatively rich texts with key places in the lectionary. To highlight the "propositional" focus, Koch correlates technical terms—being/nothing, one/many, true/false—with the specific Wisdom texts on which Eckhart comments, and notes that the only text from John's passion narrative that receives a gloss is Pilate's question, "What is truth?"

¹² Josef Koch, "Sinn und Struktur der Schriftauslegungen Meister Eckharts," in *Kleine Schriften* 1 (Rome: 1973), 413.

¹³ Eckhart, *Parisian Questions*, 85; Prol Gen, LW I, 156, n. 11.

¹⁴ M. Michèle Mulchahey, "First the Bow is Bent in Study . . ." *Dominican Education before 1350* (Toronto: 1998), 489. See also G.R. Evans, *The Language and Logic of the Bible*, vol. 2: *The Road to Reformation* (Cambridge: 1985), 144–51.

¹⁵ Mulchahey, *First the Bow*, 491 and 504.

(Jn 18:38).¹⁶ Among the many links between the commentaries and Eckhart's sermons, Koch notes how often the identical biblical text appears as *auctoritas* in the commentaries and the Latin and German sermons; and he suggests that the gloss on Moses' bold demand to see God's face (Ex. 33:13) sketches one of Eckhart's university sermons.¹⁷

The second part of Koch's thesis—the commentaries' orientation toward preaching—has been controversial. Among scholars who find it helpful, Duclow has documented the correlations between Eckhart's glosses on two texts from Wisdom (5:16 and 18:14–15) and his German sermons on these texts.¹⁸ Eberhard Winkler similarly affirms the commentaries as aids for preaching, and traces their direct ties to the Latin sermons; but he denies that preaching is the commentaries' sole purpose, as Eckhart often aims simply to elucidate biblical texts.¹⁹ However, Kurt Ruh doubts that the commentaries aim to assist preaching. For nowhere in the prologues and commentaries does Eckhart state this goal, while he does proclaim the commentaries' systematic dependence on the theological/philosophical propositions. Ruh concludes that the commentaries' intended readers were academics at the University of Paris, yet he also acknowledges that Eckhart's role as preacher shapes the commentaries.²⁰

Wouter Goris offers the most sustained critique of Koch on this issue. He views Koch's subordination of the commentaries to preaching as a "latent reduction" of their structural design to an external purpose.²¹ While recognizing the commentaries' value to preachers, he views this utility simply as a happy outcome (*Ergebnis*) of Eckhart's exegetical work, but not as the goal which determines the commentaries' structure.²² Goris therefore seeks structural principles within the commentaries themselves, and redefines Eckhart's intended audience, his "zealous reader." He turns

¹⁶ Koch, "Sinn und Struktur," 414–15. Koch takes the technical terms mainly from the list of treatises for the *Book of Propositions*. See Eckhart *Parisian Questions*, 80–81; Prol gen, LW I: 150, n. 4.

¹⁷ Koch, "Sinn und Struktur," 425.

¹⁸ Donald F. Duclow, "Meister Eckhart on the Book of Wisdom: Commentary and Sermons," *Traditio* 43 (1987), 215–35; reprinted in Duclow, *Masters of Learned Ignorance: Eriugena, Eckhart, Cusanus* (Aldershot: 2006), 151–73. See Koch, "Sinn und Struktur," 424, 427–28.

¹⁹ Eberhard Winkler, *Exegetische Methoden bei Meister Eckhart* (Tübingen: 1965), 109, 114.

²⁰ Kurt Ruh, *Meister Eckhart: Theologe, Prediger, Mystiker* (Munich: 1985), 77–78.

²¹ Wouter Goris, "Prout iudicaverit expedire: Zur Interpretation des zweiten Prologs zum *Opus expositionum* Meister Eckharts," *Medioevo* 20 (1994), 241.

²² W. Goris, *Einheit als Prinzip und Ziel: Versuch über die Einheitsmetaphysik des "Opus tripartitum" Meister Eckharts* (Leiden: 1997), 39–40.

to the second Prologue to the *Book of Commentaries*, which discusses the interlocking references among biblical verses and their multiple interpretations. Eckhart writes, "When expounding a [scriptural] text... many other texts [of Scripture] are often cited; and all these passages can be explained in their proper places by means of this one, just as at present it is explained by means of others."²³ The Bible thus forms a complex "reference system"—perhaps even a hypertext—where biblical passages and their interpretations echo or mirror each other in an ongoing cycle. Goris identifies this system as the commentaries' structural principle which permits a "zealous reader" to understand individual Bible texts both in their "proper places"—e.g. creation in Genesis' opening chapters—where they are "explained more fully," and in the cross-references where they illumine other texts. It also demands critical discernment of the reader who must grasp figurative interpretations which go beyond the texts' primary or literal meanings, and who must discern the Bible's unifying truth under its many interpretations, as when Eckhart claims that his four glosses on John 1:39 "proceed from one root."²⁴ Hence Goris argues that the reader not only selects among Eckhart's many glosses those that he can use in preaching, but—precisely as a "*studiosus lector*"—works out both the glosses' links to the propositions and transcendentals, and their place within the "reference system" that Eckhart discerns in Scripture and builds into his commentaries. To illustrate how this reading works, Goris discusses Eckhart's 22 glosses on Wisdom 8:1, "She reaches from end to end mightily, and orders all things sweetly. (*Attingit ergo a fine usque ad finem fortiter et disponit omnia suaviter.*)."²⁵

We may supplement Goris's analysis in two ways. The first concerns the sources and mechanics of Eckhart's reference system. For as Eckhart coordinates his glosses on related biblical texts, he works within well-established traditions of patristic and medieval exegesis. He uses research tools devised over the preceding centuries, as he regularly cites classic works including Augustine's commentaries, the *Glossa ordinaria*, Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, and Aquinas' *Catena aurea*. Indeed, Eckhart tells us that he defers to previous exegetes in selecting which biblical verses to analyze. Having surveyed the entire Bible and his previous interpretations of it, he writes, "I have taken care to abbreviate or to omit completely

²³ Eckhart, *Parisian Questions*, 104; Prol op expos II, LW II, 321, n. 1.

²⁴ Goris, "*Prout iudicaverit*," 268; citing Eckhart, In Ioh, n. 225.

²⁵ Ws. 8:1, Douai translation. Goris, "*Prout iudicaverit*," 248–63. See Eckhart, In sap, LW II, 502–35, nn. 167–200.

most of it, especially so that the better and more useful interpretations that the saints and venerable teachers, particularly Brother Thomas, have written are not neglected."²⁶ The exegetical tradition thus simplifies Eckhart's task by allowing him to omit much and to give quick references and summaries of previous commentaries. He also generously informs us of his sources for the verses on which he comments at length. Hence, as he begins to gloss Genesis' first chapter, he cites Augustine, Ambrose, Basil, Maimonides, and Aquinas.²⁷ Yet he relies most heavily on Augustine in the first Genesis commentary; on Maimonides for the Exodus commentary and the second Genesis commentary, the *Liber parabolarum Genesis*; and on Aquinas for the *Commentary on the Gospel of John*. In addition, Koch suggests that Eckhart used Bible concordances, florilegia culled from patristic and philosophical works, collections of *exempla*, and lexicons of speculative terms like Alan of Lille's *Distinctiones dictionum theologicarum*.²⁸ The Dominicans themselves produced many such tools, including the "biblical distinctions" of Hugh of Saint-Cher and his successors, the Saint-Jacques concordance, and subject indices.²⁹ In short, Eckhart made good use of the full range of exegetical materials available to him.

We may also supplement Goris's analysis by probing more closely how Eckhart understands Scripture's many interpretations and their underlying unity. This requires that we examine a wider range of texts where the Dominican describes his aims and methods.

ECKHART'S EXEGETICAL PROGRAM

The Prologue to the second Genesis commentary, the *Liber parabolarum Genesis* or *Book of the Parables of Genesis*, describes Eckhart's exegetical program in greatest detail. The Prologue announces the *Book of the Parables* as a new kind of commentary on select passages from Genesis and other books of the Bible. Whereas Eckhart's first commentary concerned Genesis' "more evident sense," he now seeks to "bring to light the more hidden sense of some things contained . . . in parabolical fashion 'under

²⁶ Eckhart, *Essential Sermons*, 82; Prol op exp I, LW I, 183, n. 1.

²⁷ Eckhart, *Essential Sermons*, 82–83; In Gen I, LW I, 185, n. 1.

²⁸ Josef Koch, "Zur Einführung," LW IV, xxxiii–xxxiv. Koch's comments on the Latin sermons apply also to the commentaries.

²⁹ See Mulchahey, *First the Bow*, 485–524.

the shell of the letter'".³⁰ This contrast between publicly evident and concealed meanings—between literal and parabolical—finds support in Augustine and Maimonides. Augustine contrasted Scripture's "humble" surface which offers itself to everyone, and the concealed meanings which entice "those who are not light-hearted" to probe its depths. Similarly, Maimonides compares Scripture's truth to "a golden apple covered with a net of engraved silver figures:" the letter's beautiful exterior leads a sharp-eyed reader to see a richer parabolical truth within.³¹ The Dominican supplements this visual metaphor with other, more active images: digging out "mystical understanding" is like gathering honey from the comb or kernels from ears of grain. Here interpretation requires that we break through the letter's shell to seize the spiritual kernel.³²

Patristic and medieval exegetes regularly distinguish between Scripture's letter and another, figurative range of meanings, and use the shell/kernel metaphor to illustrate it. Yet Eckhart's terminology for the hidden meanings departs from the exegetical mainstream. Whereas most commentators gather these meanings under the heading of "allegory," Eckhart uses this term rarely, usually in direct quotes from the fathers. Instead, his earlier commentaries favor the term "*figura*," while the *Book of Parables* takes up Maimonides's term "parable" to describe the Bible's concealed meanings.³³ In one sense, "parable" is equivalent to "allegory" as the overarching category for Scripture's multiple meanings. Yet as Heribert Fischer notes, it is also a more fluid term that resists dogmatizing by opening toward ever new meanings.³⁴ Similarly, Robert Dobie emphasizes

³⁰ Eckhart, *Essential Sermons*, 92; In Gen II, LW II, 447, n. 1. Yet as McGinn notes, "The mode of argumentation in the *Book of Parables* is not appreciably different from his procedure in the other scriptural commentaries" (Eckhart, *Essential Sermons*, 29). Except for chapters 1–3, different Genesis texts are analyzed in the two commentaries; see LW I, 705–09.

³¹ Eckhart, *Essential Sermons*, 92; In Gen II, LW II, 448, n. 1. Citing Moses Maimonides, "Introduction to the First Part," *Guide for the Perplexed*, trans. Schlomo Pines (Chicago: 1963), 11–12. Maimonides here comments on Pr 25:11. Eckhart's reliance on Maimonides recalls earlier exegetes like Andrew of St Victor who used Jewish commentators; see Smalley, *Study of the Bible*, 149ff.

³² See also Sermon 51, DW I, 90; and Susanne Köbele, "Primo aspectu monstruosa: Schriftauslegung bei Meister Eckhart," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsches Literatur* 122 (1993), 62–81.

³³ See Konrad Weiss, "Meister Eckharts biblische Hermeneutik," in *La Mystique rhénane* (Paris: 1963), 95–108; and Winkler, *Exegetische Methoden*, 52–53, 56–58.

³⁴ Heribert Fischer, "Die theologische Arbeitsweise Meister Eckharts in den lateinischen Werken," in *Methoden in Wissenschaft und Kunst des Mittelalters*, ed. Albert Zimmermann (Berlin: 1970), 65.

how differently the two terms function: "An allegory consists in a more one-to-one correspondence between symbol and reality while a parable is a story that is designed to lead the reader into an inner experience of that reality... The allegory remains on the plane of objective knowledge, while the parable leads to an 'inner' knowledge and represents such a knowledge."³⁵

Eckhart cites Maimonides' distinction between two kinds of parables. In the first, "every, or almost every, word of the parable separately stands for something. The second mode is when the whole parable is the likeness and expression of the whole matter of which it is a parable," but each term does not carry its own hidden meanings.³⁶ Of the two, Eckhart clearly favors the first. For as Frank Tobin notes, "In practice, both in sermons and in commentaries, Eckhart seems to have considered most of the texts he treats as examples of the first type of parable. The Biblical text is examined word for word, and almost every word is forced to yield one if not several parabolical senses."³⁷ And he approaches the entire Bible in this way, not only its familiar parables or allegories. When combined with Eckhart's limited interest in narrative context, this focus on isolated words yields an extraordinarily free—some would say arbitrary—approach to biblical texts. McGinn aptly describes this approach: "He dehistoricizes and decontextualizes the text into sentences, fragments, or even individual words that he recombines with other passages in a dense web of inter-textuality through a system of cross-referencing."³⁸ We have already seen Goris's description of this system. Here let us note the method's further consequences. As biblical texts fragment, explications of their bits and pieces multiply, producing the many glosses from which Eckhart's readers may choose. Single words—indeed, their syllables—launch wide-ranging commentaries. For example, God's "rest/*requies*" on creation's seventh day provokes commentary on God's very being as rest and as the source and goal of all created being and striving; and the term "*suaviter*" in Wisdom 8:1 suggests both divine Wisdom's sweet or pleasing ordering of

³⁵ Robert J. Dobie, "Reason and Revelation in the Thought of Meister Eckhart," *The Thomist* 67 (2003), 418.

³⁶ Eckhart, *Essential Sermons*, 95; In Gen II, LW II: 454–55, n. 5. Citing Maimonides, *Guide*, 12.

³⁷ Frank Tobin, *Meister Eckhart: Thought and Language* (Philadelphia: 1986), 28.

³⁸ Bernard McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart* (New York: 2001), 27.

all things, and—dividing “*suave*” into “*sua vi*”—its creative power, being, and life.³⁹

Eckhart further distinguishes three classes of parabolic meanings, as he hopes “to arouse the more skilled readers to seek better and richer explanations of the *theological (divina), natural, and moral truths* hidden beneath the forms and surface of the literal sense.”⁴⁰ Although this three-part division has precedents dating back to Jerome, it differs from the usual medieval distinction of four senses within Scripture: (1) a literal or historical meaning; (2) an allegorical sense which teaches what to believe; (3) a tropological or moral sense; and (4) an anagogical sense which looks toward the future, blessed life. Eckhart’s meanings do not map easily onto this conventional scheme. While he shares this scheme’s moral sense, his theological and “natural” meanings do not correspond to its specialized allegorical and anagogical senses. Nor does Eckhart’s surface, “more evident,” meaning quite match the scheme’s literal or historical sense, which in practice often referred to Old Testament narratives that commentators explained in light of the New Testament. This typological method is not central to Eckhart,⁴¹ whose “eternist” perspective gives little play to such historical issues. Moreover, as we shall see, his distinctive account of Scripture’s literal sense shatters the boundaries between meanings of every kind. Here, however, his three parabolic meanings—theological, natural, and moral—reflect Aristotle’s division of the sciences and Maimonides’ discovery of natural science throughout Genesis. He finds all three meanings not only throughout Scripture, but also in Plato and the ancient theologians and poets who “used to teach about God, nature and ethics by means of parables.” Yet he cautions against using parables and their interpretations as “proofs.” He writes, “Rather, we intend to show that what the truth of holy scripture parabolically intimates in hidden fashion agrees with what we prove and declare about matters divine, ethical and natural.”⁴²

Of the three hidden senses, the *Book of the Parables of Genesis*—like Eckhart’s other commentaries—gives most space to theological and natural interpretations. For example, its long gloss on Genesis 1:1—“In the

³⁹ See Eckhart, In Gen I, LW II, 296–324, nn. 142–81; and In Sap, LW II, 508–21, nn. 173–84.

⁴⁰ Eckhart, *Essential Sermons*, 92 [my emphasis]; In Gen II, LW II, 447, n. 1. See In Ex, LW II, 178, n. 211.

⁴¹ See Winkler, *Exegetische Methoden*, 69.

⁴² Eckhart, *Essential Sermons*, 93 and 95; In Gen II, LW II, 451, 454, nn. 2 and 4.

beginning God created heaven and earth"—first discusses "the production or emanation of the Son and the Holy Spirit from the Father in eternity, then the production or general creation of the whole universe from the one God in time, and many properties of both Creator and creature."⁴³ Eckhart distinguishes between the Trinity's inner life and the dynamics of creation, which he analyzes in terms of cause and effect, potency and act, and form and matter. Yet, he does not forget the moral sense, but concludes the gloss with ten ethical points concerning "heaven and earth," terms which represent the heavenly and terrestrial man, or spirit and flesh. We are "to strive for God and heavenly things first of all" and temporal, earthly things "secondarily and almost by accident."⁴⁴

Underlying the three parabolic meanings is Eckhart's unifying vision of Christ. He writes, "No one can be thought to understand the scriptures who does not know how to find its hidden marrow—Christ, the Truth."⁴⁵ For Eckhart assumes that truth is one and divine, and that Christ incarnates this truth and makes it available to us. He says, "Hidden under the parables . . . are many of the properties that belong to God alone, the First Principle, and that point to his nature." These principles in turn contain "the keys to metaphysics, physics and ethics" and the unfolding of the persons of the Trinity, who then "shine out in every natural, ethical and artistic work."⁴⁶ Here, parables and their interpretation extend well beyond the Bible and into all the sciences and creative activity.

Eckhart's *Commentary on John* clarifies these issues. Glossing this Gospel—central to Christian exegesis since Origen—Eckhart again explains Scripture "through the help of the natural arguments of the philosophers," and describes a dynamic circularity between revelation and philosophy: "It is the intention of this work to show how the truths of natural principles, conclusions and properties are well intimated for him 'who has ears to hear' (Mt. 13:43) in the very words of sacred scripture, which are interpreted through these natural truths."⁴⁷ Here, exegesis uncovers natural truths which biblical texts conceal and "intimate" truths—which perceptive readers "hear" only through philosophical categories and arguments. As Niklaus Largier comments, "The interpretation's goal—and the presupposition for its possibility—therefore lies in the harmony between

⁴³ Eckhart, *Essential Sermons*, 96; In Gen II, LW II, 479, n. 8.

⁴⁴ Eckhart, *Essential Sermons*, 106; In Gen II, LW II, 504, n. 37.

⁴⁵ Eckhart, *Essential Sermons*, 94; In Gen II, LW II, 453, n. 3.

⁴⁶ Eckhart, *Essential Sermons*, 94–95; In Gen II, LW II, 453–54, n. 3.

⁴⁷ Eckhart, *Essential Sermons*, 123; In Ioh, LW III, 4, nn. 2–3.

rational knowledge and the truth revealed in Scripture.”⁴⁸ This harmony echoes throughout Eckhart’s long commentary on the Gospel’s Prologue. Summarizing the opening verses (John 1:1–6), Eckhart sees them teaching “the general features of all being, both uncreated and created.”⁴⁹ The texts “In the beginning was the Word” and “The Word was with God” proclaim the Trinity, while “This Word was in the beginning with God” teaches the Trinity’s “universal causality.” Later verses distinguish the creation’s “four grades of being:” mere beings, living beings, and the human and angelic intellects. Here we encounter the kind of speculative exegesis that Spicq and Smalley criticize. Yet not only is this exegesis typical of Eckhart’s commentaries, but it also suggests why he fuses speculative theology and exegesis. For John’s Prologue has been a key theological text since at least Augustine, who claimed to find in the “books of the Platonists” the “sense” of its first 11 verses on the Word’s divine and creative reality, but not of the following verses proclaiming its Incarnation. Citing Augustine, Eckhart goes further when he correlates the entire Prologue with philosophical and scientific sources. Concerning verse 14—“The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us”—he writes that “the word universally and naturally becomes flesh in every work of nature and art and it dwells in things that are made or in which word becomes flesh.”⁵⁰ Not only as divine and creative Logos, but precisely as incarnate, the Word grounds all creation and human activity as well as salvation history. Ludwig Hödl emphasizes how this focus on the incarnate Word drives Eckhart’s integration of natural philosophy into his theology and exegesis, and describes the Dominican’s “synthesis of the truth of belief and natural philosophy” as yielding “an ontologically grounded knowledge of salvation [*Heilswissen*], and a knowledge of nature [*Naturwissen*] guided by sacred history.”⁵¹ In this way, the Prologue—and all Scripture—gains a rich subtext which Eckhart’s biblical commentaries explore with all the academic tools at his disposal.

As he probes this subtext, Eckhart admits that his interpretations seem “strange, doubtful or false.” Yet he argues that this radical exegesis reflects the language of Scripture itself. Glossing the Gospel’s claim that the world would not contain the books necessary to record all Jesus’s deeds

⁴⁸ Niklaus Largier, commentary on In Ioh, in his edition of Eckhart, *Werke*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt: 1993), 836–37.

⁴⁹ Eckhart, *Essential Sermons*, 152; In Ioh, LW III, 70, n. 82.

⁵⁰ Eckhart, *Essential Eckhart*, 171; In Ioh, LW III, 108, nn.124–25. Citing Augustine, *Confessions* 7.9.13.

⁵¹ Ludwig Hödl, “Naturphilosophie und Heilsbotschaft in Meister Eckharts Auslegung des Johannes-Evangeliums,” in *La Filosofia della Natura nel Medioevo* (Milan: 1966), 646.

(Jn 21:25), Eckhart says, "Such a mode of speaking, that is, excessively, properly belongs to the divine scriptures. Everything divine, as such, is immense and not subject to measure." To express this reality, Scripture bends the rules of narrative and grammar; and since "the excellence of divine things does not allow them to be offered to us uncovered," it hides them "beneath sensible figures;"⁵² hence, Scripture's parabolic meanings and the need to explain them in equally liberating, extravagant ways.

Eckhart further addresses the Bible's language in perhaps his boldest exegetical innovation: redefining the literal sense. In the Prologue to the *Book of the Parables of Genesis*, he begins on familiar ground by citing Aquinas, who defines Scripture's literal sense in terms of authorial intention: "The literal sense is that which the author intends, and God is the author of holy scripture."⁵³ But the two Dominicans view this authorship and literal meaning quite differently. Thomas distinguishes between God and the Bible's human authors, whose intentions govern what they write. He argues that scriptural terms have a single literal sense whereby they signify something; the other senses derive from the meanings of the thing signified. Yet Thomas's understanding of what biblical writers intend—and hence their works' literal sense—remains quite broad, as he claims that Isaiah knowingly prophesies Christ, and that the evangelists consciously introduce spiritual meanings into the Gospel narratives.⁵⁴ Eckhart, however, goes further and blurs Thomas's nuanced distinctions with far-reaching consequences. Setting aside the human scribes, he focuses directly on God who—as Truth itself and Scripture's author—"comprehends, inspires and intends all truth at one time in his intellect." Eckhart concludes that "every true sense is a literal sense."⁵⁵ Here, the boundaries between literal and parabolic meanings disappear within a vastly expanded literal sense, which embraces whatever God intends—including all hidden theological, natural, and moral truths, and not only those intended by Scripture's human authors. He cites Augustine's claim that God may disclose a truth to someone reading the Bible, "even if the [human] author he is reading did not grasp it."⁵⁶ In this way the reader and exegete eclipse the biblical

⁵² Eckhart, In Ioh, LW III, 649, n. 745; cited in McGinn, *Mystical Thought*, 26.

⁵³ Eckhart, *Essential Sermons*, 93; In Gen II, LW II, 449, n. 2. See Thomas Aquinas, *S. theol.* I, q. 1, a. 10; and more generally, Evans, *Language and Logic*, 42–50.

⁵⁴ See Beryl Smalley, *The Gospels in the Schools c. 1100–c. 1280* (London: 1985), 266–69.

⁵⁵ Eckhart, *Essential Sermons*, 93; In Gen II, LW II, 449–50, n. 2.

⁵⁶ Eckhart, *Essential Sermons*, 93; In Gen II, LW II, 449–50, n. 2. Citing Augustine, *Confessions* 12.18.27. See In Ioh, LW III, 168, n. 199: "multa similia, quae praeter intentionem loquentium spiritus sanctus utique his verbis impressit."

authors themselves. For Winkler notes that the human scribe “knows nothing of a meaning which the author, namely God, intends additionally in his words. If the exegete elicits this co-intended truth, he is doing legitimate exegesis.”⁵⁷

More than legitimate, such exegesis becomes a key to Eckhart’s speculative and mystical project. For it frees the exegete to explore in all the directions that Eckhart himself takes by opening Scripture to a vast range of speculative and even—to contemporary eyes—arbitrary and fanciful readings. The parabolic meanings that Eckhart uncovers thus become the Bible’s very “letter.” In addition, this literal sense dramatically transforms the role of the reader because, as McGinn suggests, “we might say that the exegete has become the text in the sense that it is he/she who provides the meaning adjudged as truly divine. Even more radically, the mystical interpreter has become one with God, the author of the Bible.”⁵⁸ Here Eckhart’s exegesis becomes, in John Caputo’s phrase, a “mystical hermeneutics.”⁵⁹ Interpretation becomes “mystical” in two senses: the medieval sense of bringing “hidden” meanings to light where they become Scripture’s co-intended “letter;” and the modern sense of cultivating a transforming awareness of God’s presence.⁶⁰ Niklaus Largier highlights both senses in analyzing Eckhart’s “hermeneutic of existence:” as reason explores the Bible’s inexhaustible sea of meaning, it confronts its own limits and moves beyond them in detachment.⁶¹ Eckhart thus calls his “*studiosus lector*” not only to learning, but also to self-critique and transformation in the very act of reading and interpretation. His sermons extend this call to wider audiences with dramatic results, but to follow that expansive move would lead beyond the topic of this essay.

⁵⁷ Winkler, *Exegetische Methoden*, 35.

⁵⁸ McGinn, *Mystical Thought*, 28.

⁵⁹ John D. Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger’s Thought* (Athens, Ohio: 1978), 169. See Donald F. Duclow, “Hermeneutics and Meister Eckhart,” *Philosophy Today* 28 (1984), 36–42; reprinted in Duclow, *Masters of Learned Ignorance*, 141–50.

⁶⁰ On “mysticism” and its history, see Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism: Origins to the Fifth Century* (New York: 1991), xv–xx and 265–343.

⁶¹ Niklaus Largier, “Intellekttheorie, Hermeneutik und Allegorie: Subjekt und Subjektivität bei Meister Eckhart,” in *Geschichte und Vorgeschichte der modernen Subjektivität*, vol. 1, ed. Reto Luzius Fetz et al. (Berlin: 1998), 475–77. See Winkler, *Exegetische Methoden*, 36–38.

CONCLUSION: ECKHART AND MEDIEVAL EXEGESIS

How do Eckhart's Bible commentaries look within the medieval intellectual landscape? Smalley and Spicq document the emergence of exegesis as a discipline distinct from theology, each with its own tools and genres: the continuous Bible commentary, and the academic *quaestio* and *summa*. However, Eckhart's Bible commentaries are not self-contained exegetical works, but overflow with systematic theology and philosophy. They rely heavily on Thomas Aquinas and the Latin translations of Maimonides, while also using many newer exegetical tools: concordances, subject indices, Maimonides' "parables," and so on. In short, Eckhart puts everything at his disposal into his commentaries. It is precisely this inclusiveness that makes his exegesis distinctive. For Eckhart, never one to respect boundaries and genres, blurs the emerging separation of academic theology from exegesis by doing his theological work in his biblical commentaries. In this respect, Winkler notes, Eckhart appears more traditional than many of his contemporaries because he theologizes within the patristic and monastic tradition of *lectio divina*.⁶² He thus resembles Augustine and Bernard of Clairvaux more than Thomas Aquinas and Nicholas of Lyra.

In addition, Eckhart's exegetical approach spills over into his preaching and moves into mystical theology. Whether or not we agree with Koch that the *Opus expositionum* has preaching as its purpose, the links between the commentaries and sermons are well documented. For example, Sermon 6 on the "just" person's union with God echoes the commentary on Wisdom 5:16,⁶³ and the *Commentary on John's Gospel* highlights divine sonship and union with God in Christ—themes which the sermons constantly proclaim. Not surprisingly, Eckhart's exegesis and preaching thus lead into mystical theology. As McGinn comments, "Eckhart believed that mystical consciousness was fundamentally hermeneutical: that is, it is achieved in the act of hearing, interpreting and preaching Scripture."⁶⁴

Eckhart's broad hermeneutic—embracing speculative thought, preaching, and mystical theology—makes it difficult to place his biblical commentaries within a narrowly conceived history of exegesis. We have seen him reshape biblical meanings in light of Maimonides and Aristotle, redefine Scripture's very "letter," and dramatically extend exegesis's mystical

⁶² Winkler, *Exegetische Methoden*, 114–16. See also Ruh, *Meister Eckhart*, 77.

⁶³ See Duclow, "Eckhart on Wisdom," 219–26.

⁶⁴ McGinn, *Mystical Thought*, 24–25.

reach in his preaching. While these moves may be unusual, they surely deserve a place in the history of medieval exegesis. De Lubac's monumental study of Scripture's four senses broadened this history beyond a simple advance from allegory to literal and historical commentary. In another vein, G.R. Evans has stressed the interplay—rather than opposition—between exegesis and developments in grammar, signification theory, and logic.⁶⁵ Similarly, specialized studies of individual exegetes and biblical books—e.g. the Song of Songs—have highlighted how diverse and flexible medieval exegetes could be. Engaging Eckhart's commentaries and hermeneutical project can only enrich our understanding of medieval exegesis and of Eckhart himself.

⁶⁵ Evans, *Language and Logic*.

MEISTER ECKHART'S VERNACULAR PREACHING

Bruce Milem

In his sermon on poverty of spirit, Meister Eckhart remarks, "Thus we say that a person should be so poor that he neither is nor has any place in which God could work. Where a person retains a place, there he retains distinction. Therefore I beg God that he make me free of God, for my essential being is above God, since we call God the beginning of creatures."¹ These lines still shock. Eckhart prays to God, but to be made free of God. He urges poverty of spirit, yet claims to be above God. He implies that a common way of thinking about God, as the creator, "the beginning of creatures," is merely conventional and possibly inadequate. Eckhart said these words in a sermon in Middle High German, possibly in Cologne toward the end of his life,² in his function as a Dominican friar, a member of the Order of Preachers, which was formed to combat heresy and uphold orthodoxy in the growing cities of Western Europe. One hundred-fourteen of his sermons in Middle High German have survived. They are Eckhart's most famous works. Manuscripts of his sermons were copied, distributed, and read during his lifetime and for decades afterwards. They formed the basis for the revival of interest in Eckhart in the early nineteenth century. Today as well books collecting Eckhart's writings for a general audience mainly draw from the vernacular sermons. They exhibit great verve in their ideas and language.

Despite their popularity, Eckhart's sermons are challenging for readers. Indeed, their popularity and their challenge have the same roots: the sermons' subject matter and Eckhart's style of preaching. Eckhart's sermons combine vivid imagery, philosophical abstraction, and dramatic phrasing to create texts that give at once the impression of plain speech and veiled

¹ All translations from Eckhart are my own. Translations are made from the text in the critical edition of Eckhart's writings: *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke: Die deutschen Werke*, eds. Josef Quint and Georg Steer, 5 vols. (Stuttgart, 1958–). Further references to this work will be made using the abbreviation "DW," followed by the volume, page, and line numbers. This passage is from DW 2, 502:6–7. I will also refer to Eckhart's Middle High German sermons by their numbers in DW, using the abbreviation "Pr.," short for "Predigt," the German word for "sermon." This sermon is Pr. 52.

² See Kurt Ruh, *Meister Eckhart: Theologe, Prediger, Mystiker* (Munich, 1989), 158.

hints. To gain a sense of the distinctive texts that Eckhart's sermons are, we will first consider what they seem to be about, examine some theories for why Eckhart preaches as he does, and conclude by looking closely at one sermon, Pr. 48.

1. THE SERMONS' SUBJECT MATTER

It is not always clear what Eckhart is talking about in his sermons. To be sure, certain themes and images appear frequently, such as the birth of the Word or the Son in the soul. The problem is figuring out what they mean or refer to. Let us begin by saying that Eckhart addresses the relationship between God and the human individual. This may seem obvious, since Eckhart's sermons speak continually of God and the soul. But one problem immediately arises: as the above passage from Pr. 52, the sermon on spiritual poverty, shows, Eckhart raises questions about what the word "God" means, which complicates the bald claim that Eckhart addresses the relationship between God and the human individual. And this raises the possibility that Eckhart uses traditional words in new ways and in effect develops a theological language of his own. (He may not be consistent with this language from one sermon to the next, either.) If this is the case, then one has to read Eckhart's sermons for a while and learn his language to grasp what he is talking about, and pocket summaries of his sermons will turn out to be misleading precisely because they depend on the standard meanings for Eckhart's words, and not Eckhart's own meanings.

Still, for the sake of argument, let us say that Eckhart's sermons address the relationship between God and the human individual. This would agree with what Eckhart himself says in his most extensive description of his own preaching, at the beginning of Pr. 53. There Eckhart says, "When I preach, I take care to speak of detachment, and that one should become free of himself and of all things. Second, that one should again become formed into the simple good that God is. Third, that one should consider the great nobility that God has settled on the soul, with which a person may come wonderfully to God. Fourth, of the purity of divine nature—what brightness is with divine nature, that is unspeakable. God is a word, an unspoken word."³

³ DW 2, 528:4–529:2.

Eckhart mentions four themes. The middle two clearly address the potential relation between God and a human person or "soul." A person can be "formed into the simple good that God is," he says, and, thanks to God-given "nobility," a person may "come wonderfully to God." From these statements, it appears that people can enjoy quite a close relationship with God. Indeed, so close a relationship that the word "relationship" may not apply. Eckhart says that a person can "become formed into the simple good that God is." "Simple" translates the word *einvaltige*, which means simple in the sense of having no parts. Eckhart thus holds out the possibility that someone can become God in a unity so complete that no distinction can be made between God and the person. Eckhart preached many and probably most of the vernacular sermons we have to audiences largely composed of Dominican nuns and Beguines (women who lived in religious communities without taking formal vows and often without ecclesiastical supervision).⁴ Many of these listeners were interested in union with God and ecstatic, visionary experiences. Eckhart's reference to becoming God could not have failed to interest them. Since union with God is an essential concern of Christian mysticism, it is not surprising that Eckhart's sermons are often considered mystical texts.

Now, suppose that the soul's relationship or union with God is the primary subject of Eckhart's sermons. Readers will want to learn what Eckhart's views are. What is union with God, and how is it achieved? But answering these questions cannot be done quickly, for two reasons. First, Eckhart uses many images in his sermons that apparently refer to union with God. He talks about giving birth to the Son or Word in the soul and about breaking through to the Godhead beyond God. He describes a "ground" which is both God's ground and the soul's ground. He uses different images to represent people who are close to or one with God: the nobleman, the just person, the virgin-wife, the poor in spirit, and others. Do all of these images refer to the same thing, event, or condition, or to different ones? Is one of these images more important than the others?

Second, Eckhart says different things about union with God. Here are five different descriptions:

⁴ See Lydia Wegener Chapter in the present volume for a critical review of the claim that Eckhart preached primarily to Dominican nuns and Beguines. There are now strong counter-arguments against this claim. (Ed.)

1. Eckhart often suggests that the way to union with God is by practicing detachment, which is the first topic mentioned in his summary in Pr. 53. Detachment involves getting rid of self-centered desires and goals. Eckhart sometimes talks of “living without a why,” that is, acting without concern for self-interest. His descriptions of detachment suggest a life of humble service to others and a serene equanimity in all situations, however good or bad. In Pr. 2, he says that anyone who wants to conceive and give birth to the Son, as Mary did, must first give up all his or her attachments to ordinary things. In this model, union with God occurs in time and depends on human actions in time.

2. Eckhart often talks about God as present in a particular function or ability of the soul, especially the “intellect,” which is what medievals called the soul’s power to gain knowledge or truth. Many scholars plausibly suppose that the intellect is that “nobility” mentioned in Pr. 53 that is conferred by God on the soul. In Pr. 2, Eckhart explains that the soul has a “power,” probably the intellect, in which “God is always verdant and blooming in all the joy and in all the glory that he is in himself.”⁵ God’s presence in this power appears to be eternal: “God is in this power as in the eternal now.”⁶ Here we have a different model for union with God: God is to be found in a particular faculty of the soul. Moreover, God’s presence there seems to be eternal rather than temporal.

3. Yet Eckhart also often says that God is present to the soul in a more inward or intimate way. In Pr. 2 he speaks of a “little castle” in the soul, which he deliberately distinguishes from the “power” in the soul he mentioned before. Eckhart describes this little castle as a “single one” (*einic ein*), “free” of all forms and names. In order to look inside, God has to get rid of all God’s properties, including the three Persons of the Trinity.⁷ In other sermons Eckhart uses the image of the “ground of the soul,” which turns out to be God’s ground, too. This union, like the previous kind, seems eternal rather than temporal. But it takes place at a deeper level than the previous one. This union is so complete that God and the soul are identical and cannot be distinguished.

4. Eckhart sometimes appeals to the traditional notion of God as the creator who sustains everything in being. In Eckhart’s interpretation, this means that only God truly has being, and ordinary things, or “creatures,”

⁵ DW 1, 32:3–4.

⁶ DW 1, 34:1–2.

⁷ DW 1, 42–44.

exist only thanks to God's own being, which God "lends" to them. In Pr. 4, he says, "All creatures are a pure nothing . . . What has no being, is nothing. All creatures have no being, for their being depends on the presence of God."⁸ In this version, every creature is already united with God, simply by virtue of existing. This kind of union can be understood in temporal terms as something that is renewed every moment, but it is also rooted in God's eternal act of creation. Though it joins God and creatures, one can also tell them apart. God is the source of being who properly possesses it, while creatures merely receive and borrow being.

5. Eckhart sometimes speaks of God and the soul as united in activity, not in being. Often he develops one of the previous ideas of union along these lines. In Pr. 6, he speaks of creation as an act in which God and creatures are united: "Working and becoming are one. If the carpenter does not work, the house does not become. When the axe lies resting, then the becoming also lies resting. God and I we are one in this work; he works, and I become."⁹ But in Pr. 48, which we will look at in detail below, he suggests that God and the soul are united in one of its powers because of the activity that power performs. Eckhart probably means the intellect again, in which case there is something about its activity of knowing that joins the soul with God. In either case, God and the soul (or creatures) remain distinct from each other while working together.

The differences among these accounts of union or identity with God must be acknowledged. Some versions involve time, others make it eternal, and at least one does both. Some treat union as an event, others treat it as a condition, as part of the metaphysics of being created. In some versions God and the soul are distinct, in others they are identical, without distinction. Though a particular sermon may emphasize one account of union, it may also include several. The first three versions, for example, are all found in Pr. 2. If we are reading Eckhart's sermons in order to find out his views on the nature and possibility of union with God, then there are several questions that we need to address. Is there just one kind of union, which can be described in many ways? Is there just one kind of union, but one with multiple stages or aspects? Or are there several kinds of union?

Answering these questions can only be done by reading the sermons closely and making judgments about how Eckhart's claims go together.

⁸ DW 1, 69:8–70:3.

⁹ DW 1, 114:3–5.

Recourse to external sources, such as Eckhart's Latin writings or his intellectual background, is unlikely to help. Turning to the Latin writings for help would assume that Eckhart is trying to say the same things in both the Latin texts and his vernacular sermons. But this is by no means certain. Eckhart addressed different audiences in his different languages. His Latin works were meant mainly for students of theology, while he preached his German sermons largely to nuns and Beguines interested in mystical experience and union with God.¹⁰ Though the dating of Eckhart's various texts is uncertain, most of Eckhart's Latin writings probably date from 1302 to 1313. Most (though not all) of his German sermons probably date from his time in Strasbourg and Cologne, between 1313 and 1327.¹¹ It is possible that Eckhart's thinking changed or developed. Some scholars suggest that Eckhart's exposure to the nuns and Beguines in Strasbourg affected his approach to biblical interpretation and preaching and gave to both a more spiritual orientation.¹² Of course, the person who preached these sermons also wrote those Latin texts, including the great scriptural commentaries. Much can be learned from comparing the German and Latin works. But treating the Latin writings as the interpretive key to the vernacular sermons depends on questionable assumptions.

¹⁰ See note 4.

¹¹ For a survey of Eckhart's life and a summary of recent scholarship on the dating of his works, see Bernard McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany (1300–1500)* (New York, 2005) 94–107. Of the 114 Middle High German sermons we have, thirty-two come from the sermon collection *Paradisus anime intelligentis*, which also includes some thirty additional sermons from other preachers. The collection is thought to have been assembled in the 1330s, and Eckhart's sermons are thought to date from his time as a Dominican provincial in Erfurt, between 1303 and 1311. Burkhard Hasebrink, however, argues that this dating is not certain. It is also possible that Eckhart's sermons were revised by the editor(s) of the collection. Another four sermons (Pr. 101–04) comprise a Christmas sermon cycle on the birth of Christ. Georg Steer thinks that these sermons, along with two others (Pr. 105 and Pr. 106) date from between 1298 and 1305. The seventy-six remaining sermons are probably from Eckhart's time in Strasbourg (1313–23) and Cologne (1323–27). See Burkhard Hasebrink, "Studies on the Redaction and Use of the *Paradisus anime intelligentis*," in Jacqueline Hamesse and Xavier Hermand, eds., *De l'homélie au sermon: Histoire de la prédication médiévale* (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1993) 143–58; and Georg Steer, "Meister Eckharts Predigtzyklus von der ewigen geburt: Mutmassungen über die Zeit seiner Entstehung," in Walter Haug and Wolfram Schneider-Lastin, eds., *Deutsche Mystik im abendländische Zusammenhang* (Tübingen, 2000) 253–81. It is also possible that Eckhart worked on some of his Latin writings during his time in Strasbourg. Marie-Anne Vannier thinks that his Latin commentary on the Gospel of John dates from this period. See Marie-Anne Vannier, "L'homme noble, figure de l'oeuvre d'Eckhart à Strasbourg," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 70 (1996): 73–89.

¹² Niklaus Largier, "FIGURATIO LOCUTIO: Hermeneutik und Philosophie bei Eckhart von Hochheim und Heinrich Seuse," in Klaus Jacobi, ed., *Meister Eckhart: Lebensstationen—Redesituationen* (Berlin, 1997) 303–32, especially 328–32.

Nor can one simply appeal to Eckhart's intellectual background for help. It is tempting to remember that there were many German Dominican thinkers, such as Dietrich of Freiburg and Berthold of Moosburg, who were influenced by Neoplatonism, especially Proclus' version of it. Eckhart is rightly seen in this context. His frequent emphasis on a unity shorn of all properties and forms, which he identifies with God or locates in the soul or both, is strongly Neoplatonic. His emphasis on the intellect shows Neoplatonic influence, too, though it may also reflect Eckhart's debt to the Islamic commentators on Aristotle, especially Averroes.¹³ Aquinas is another influence, particularly in the way that Eckhart understands creatures' dependence on the creator God. But in the sermons none of these influences is decisive. The fact that all these influences can be detected in Eckhart's sermons, such as in the different descriptions of union above, suggests that Eckhart draws on all the resources of his tradition in eclectic fashion.

To understand the view on union with God that Eckhart puts across in the sermons, then, there is nothing else to do but read the sermons carefully and do the best one can to put together his various statements. This will require fine judgments of interpretation. But now two other difficulties must be raised. First, recall the fourth theme mentioned by Eckhart in his description of his preaching in Pr. 53. He says that he speaks "of the purity of divine nature--what brightness is with divine nature, that is unspeakable. God is a word, an unspoken word." Eckhart here mentions God's ineffability. This is the definitive theme of what is often called "negative" or "apophatic" theology. The great Jewish philosopher Maimonides, whom Eckhart read and often cites, argued that we cannot know or say what God is. We can only say what God is not or what God has done, but such statements do not describe what God actually is. Eckhart himself asserts the ineffability of God in many sermons. In Pr. 53, Eckhart turns God's ineffability into a problem for every created thing: "All creatures want to speak God in all their works; they all speak, as closely as they can, yet they cannot speak him. Whether they want to or not, whether it be pleasant or painful to them: they all want to speak God, and yet he remains unspoken."¹⁴

¹³ On Eckhart's debt to Islamic philosophers, see Kurt Flasch, *Meister Eckhart: Die Geburt der "Deutschen Mystik" aus dem Geist der arabischen Philosophie* (Munich, 2006).

¹⁴ DW 2, 531:1-4.

God's ineffability complicates any discussion of union with God, because such discussion assumes that we can in fact talk about God as a determinate something to be united with. But Eckhart sometimes questions even this. In Pr. 52, he remarks, "When I stood in my first cause, there I had no God, and there I was the cause of myself... here I stood free of God and all things. But when of my free will I went out and I received my created being, then I had a God; for before there were creatures, then God was not God; rather he was what he was."¹⁵ In this passage Eckhart describes a situation, "when I stood in my first cause," that apparently takes place before God comes into being. He is clearly speaking of something primordial, yet he rejects the word "God" as inadequate. Bernard McGinn has persuasively argued that one of Eckhart's favorite images, the "ground," works in a similar way as an "explosive metaphor."¹⁶ This ground is the ground of the soul but also God's ground, and it effectively disrupts the distinction between the soul and God in favor of an identity that fuses the two without distinction. The difficulty of this notion is shown by how we talk about it: to understand the ground, we describe it as fusing God and the soul and thereby use the very distinction that the ground undermines. Eckhart's emphasis on the ineffability of God makes it more difficult to pin down the subject matter of his sermons, because such attempts rely on the very terms and distinctions that Eckhart often seems at pains to erase.

The second difficulty is this: Eckhart sometimes sets conditions for understanding his sermons. One famous instance appears in Pr. 52. Before giving his account of spiritual poverty, Eckhart says, "Now I ask you that you be in such a way that you understand this speech; for I say to you in the eternal truth: if you are not like this truth, of which we now wish to speak, then you will not be able to understand me."¹⁷ This is a strange, even shocking statement, for it raises serious questions about the point of the sermon to come. Presumably Eckhart preaches about spiritual poverty in order to help his listeners attain it. But his statement implies that those not already spiritually poor will not be able to understand the sermon. Eckhart ends this sermon as he ends several others, with remarks comforting those who have not understood: "Whoever does not understand this speech should not burden his heart with it. For as long as a person is

¹⁵ DW 2, 492:3–493:2.

¹⁶ McGinn, *Harvest* 83–90, 118–24. See also Bernard McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart: The Man from Whom God Hid Nothing* (New York, 2001) 35–52.

¹⁷ DW 2, 487:5–7.

not like this truth, so long shall he not understand this speech; for this is an unhidden truth, which has come here out of the heart of God without medium."¹⁸ In turn, those who understand the sermon must already be spiritually poor and so, one would think, do not need it.

Let us take Eckhart's comments seriously here. He seems to be saying that one must already be a certain way, have reached a certain stage of spiritual development, in order to understand him. The standard he sets is high. In Pr. 52, he defines spiritual poverty as wanting nothing, knowing nothing, and having nothing, terms he borrows from the great Beguine writer Marguerite Porete. Presumably one must already want, know, and have nothing in order to grasp his discussion of wanting, knowing, and having nothing. John Tauler, who was a friend of Eckhart's and an important preacher in his own right, acknowledged this quality of Eckhart's preaching when he remarked that Eckhart spoke from eternity but was understood according to time. It is hard to know what it would mean to speak from eternity, but the comment dramatically suggests that Eckhart speaks from a distinctive, perhaps unique point of view, which one must share in order to understand Eckhart fully.

Our focus up to this point has been on figuring out what Eckhart's sermons are about, and we have encountered several difficulties: a multitude of images, competing descriptions of union with God, Eckhart's insistence on God's ineffability, and his assertion that only those who are ready will understand him. These difficulties make it challenging to take a synoptic perspective on all Eckhart's vernacular sermons and draw conclusions about his views.

2. ECKHART'S STYLE OF PREACHING

Though Eckhart's images and claims vary considerably from one passage and sermon to the next, his voice, his way of speaking and using language, remains consistent. Eckhart's distinctive use of language is the other main root of the sermons' popularity and challenge. One aspect of this is Eckhart's frequent use of various stylistic devices, such as imagery, paradox,

¹⁸ DW 2, 506:1–3. Walter Haug has very interesting comments on this aspect of Eckhart's preaching. See Walter Haug, "Eckharts deutsches Predigtwerk: Mystische Erfahrung und philosophische Auseinandersetzung," in Walter Haug, *Die Wahrheit der Fiktion: Studien zur weltlichen und geistlichen Literatur des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit* (Tübingen, 2003) 521–37.

and neologisms.¹⁹ Another aspect is Eckhart's approach to preaching. Eckhart's vernacular sermons were originally given not as written texts but as sermons. He delivered each one to a particular group of people in a certain time and place. This makes the sermons more than vehicles for ideas. They can also be seen as events, actions, or performances. From this point of view, what Eckhart says is only part of the story. We also have to ask, what is he doing in saying these things? What kinds of effects does he create? From this point of view, the sermons are not transparent statements of Eckhart's opinions. Instead, Eckhart uses the event of the sermon to do something. In turn, one important goal of reading Eckhart's sermons is figuring out what that is.

This interpretive strategy emphasizes the integrity of each sermon. Rather than picking sentences and passages from several sermons and putting together an account of Eckhart's views, this approach takes one sermon at a time and follows the movement of language and thought from start to finish. Though scholars have offered interpretations of individual sermons over the past century of work on Eckhart, this practice has increased in recent decades. The clearest sign is the *Lectura Eckhardi* series, now in three volumes, in which leading Eckhart scholars conduct readings of single sermons (including Latin ones).²⁰ The aim is to understand what Eckhart is trying to do in giving his sermons and how he uses language to accomplish those goals.

Many scholars have offered theories that explain Eckhart's aims and strategies as a preacher. For instance, Joachim Theisen uses the Dominican missal of Eckhart's day to put his sermons back into their liturgical context. He identifies the dates in the liturgical calendar on which Eckhart would have given particular sermons and goes on to show how Eckhart often structures his sermons according to the particular feast and scriptural text of that day. In Theisen's view, Eckhart uses his sermons to show his listeners the true meaning of the event, the mass, taking place then and there. Especially important is the sacrament of the Eucharist, which enacts the union of God and human beings. Theisen says, "the

¹⁹ Eckhart's style or usage of language has been well studied. In English, excellent accounts can be found in Frank Tobin, *Meister Eckhart: Thought and Language* (Philadelphia Press, 1986), chapters 3 and 5, and Oliver Davies, *Meister Eckhart: Mystical Theologian* (London, 1991) 179–94.

²⁰ Georg Steer and Loris Sturlese, eds., *Lectura Eckhardi: Predigten Meister Eckharts von Fachgelehrten gelesen und gedeutet*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart, 1998, 2003, 2009). I believe a fourth volume is in preparation.

sermon must be understood as a dynamic element inside the dynamic of the mass, with the highpoint in the Eucharist."²¹

Another theory of Eckhart's preaching emphasizes his biblical interpretation. Nearly all of Eckhart's sermons begin with a Bible verse, which he translates from Latin into Middle High German, and often this verse furnishes the main subject matter and structure of the sermon, as Eckhart goes through each part and explains its meaning. Eckhart takes considerable liberties in his translations and interpretations of Scripture. While medieval exegetes commonly distinguished between the literal meaning and the various spiritual meanings of Scripture, Donald Duclow shows that Eckhart regarded all such meanings, whether "literal" or "spiritual," to be intended by God and thus in fact literal.²² Eckhart sometimes portrays scripture as inexhaustibly full of meaning. In Pr. 22, Eckhart says, "Scripture is so full that no one can get to the bottom of the smallest word."²³ This means that interpretation of Scripture is not secondary to the text itself. Instead, interpretation, however extravagant, is itself part of the literal meaning and fabric of Scripture. In interpreting the Bible, the exegete is participating with God in the writing of Scripture and thus enjoys a kind of union with God. This would be true of Eckhart's Latin commentaries as well as his vernacular sermons. But Niklaus Largier suggests that such mystical hermeneutics plays a special role in the vernacular sermons. There Eckhart as preacher interprets Scripture in front of his listeners and draws them into the union with God that such interpretation brings about.²⁴ In this reading, Eckhart's sermons are themselves the event in which union takes place.

Burkhard Hasebrink suggests that Eckhart's sermons are examples of *inzitative Rede* or "appellative speech."²⁵ They use specific strategies to involve listeners (and readers) in the mystical union they discuss. One strategy is the profusion of images we have already mentioned. For

²¹ Joachim Theisen, *Predigt und Gottesdienst: Liturgische Strukturen in den Predigten Meister Eckharts* (Frankfurt, 1990) 553.

²² Donald F. Duclow, "Meister Eckhart on the Book of Wisdom: Commentary and Sermons," *Masters of Learned Ignorance: Eriugena, Eckhart, Cusanus* (Aldershot, 2006) 171–72. See also Duclow's "Hermeneutics and Meister Eckhart," in the same volume.

²³ Pr. 22. DW 1, 381:4–5.

²⁴ Niklaus Largier, "Intellekttheorie, Hermeneutik und Allegorie: Subjekt und Subjektivität bei Meister Eckhart," in Reto Luzius Fetz, Roland Hagenbüchle, and Peter Schulz, eds., *Geschichte und Vorgeschichte der modernen Subjektivität* (Berlin, 1998).

²⁵ Burkhard Hasebrink, *Formen inzitativer Rede bei Meister Eckhart: Untersuchungen zur literarischen Konzeption der deutschen Predigt* (Tübingen, 1992). The translation ("appellative speech") is Bernard McGinn's.

Hasebrink, it is a deliberate choice on Eckhart's part to employ so many images without explaining how they relate to each other. This compels listeners to do the work of interpretation themselves and reach an understanding of Eckhart's meaning. In this way Eckhart avoids trying to state his meaning directly in words, which he may not be able to do if we take seriously his emphasis on the ineffability of God. Also, rather than telling his listeners what they must do, Eckhart speaks in hypothetical terms: if you want this, then do that. Both strategies soften Eckhart's authority and make it easier for listeners to leave the sermons behind when they no longer need them. In this way, Hasebrink connects Eckhart's method of preaching to negative theology, which raises doubts concerning language about God, and to detachment, which calls for letting go of all things, including sermons. On this view, the measure of the sermons' success is not how well they articulate theological truths but how effectively they draw their audience into the pursuit of detachment and divine union.

Michael A. Sells includes Eckhart with several other figures as a practitioner of what he calls "apophatic discourse."²⁶ As Sells points out, the claim that God is ineffable, which Eckhart makes in many places, is self-contradictory. In saying that God cannot be spoken of or is beyond the reach of language, we are in fact speaking about God. Our act contradicts our statement. In Sells's view, Eckhart responds to this contradiction by speaking in a new way. He recognizes that every statement he makes about the divine is imperfect or limited and must be corrected or "unsaid." But the correcting statement is also inadequate and must be taken back as well, and so on *ad infinitum*. What results is an open-ended, continually self-undermining discourse that, in theory, can never end in any positive statement about the divine. In this scenario, Eckhart's statements never succeed in capturing the truth about God and have to be interpreted within the context of the sermon as a whole, as part of the movement of negation that characterizes apophatic discourse.

In all these theories, and many others besides, Eckhart's speech turns out to be something other than a vehicle for information about God or the soul. All of these theories treat Eckhart's act of preaching as an event in itself or as part of a larger event. They recommend that readers keep this event-character in mind while interpreting Eckhart's sermons.

²⁶ Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings* (Chicago, 1994). See pp. 1–13 for Sells's theoretical account of apophatic discourse and pp. 146–205 for its application to Eckhart.

3. PREDIGT 48: THE SPARK IN THE SOUL AND THE STILL DESERT

There is no better way to gain a sense of the power and challenge in Eckhart's preaching than by reading his sermons. So let us look closely at one sermon, Pr. 48.²⁷ It has the convenient virtues of brevity and fame, especially for its concluding image of the still desert. In one respect this sermon is not representative: it does not start with a verse from Scripture, and our discussion will leave aside questions of biblical interpretation. Eckhart begins this sermon instead with a saying from a "master:"

A master says: all like things love each other and unite themselves with each other, and all unlike things flee each other and hate each other. Now one master says that nothing is so unlike each other as heaven and earth. The earth has felt this in its nature, that it is far from and unlike heaven. For this reason it has fled to the lowest place, and for this reason the earth is immovable, so that it does not come near to heaven. Heaven has become aware of this in its nature, that the earth has fled from it and taken the lowest place. Therefore it pours itself completely in a fruitful manner into the earth, and the masters assert that the broad, wide heaven does not hold itself back as far as the point of a needle, it gives itself so completely in a fruitful way into the earth. Therefore the earth is called the most fruitful creature of all temporal things.²⁸

Eckhart cites an unnamed master (possibly Aquinas), who asserts that like things attract and opposites repel each other. A second master says that "nothing is so unlike each other as heaven and earth." From these principles, Eckhart spins a story. Since heaven must represent everything noble and good, earth must be base, and since the earth recognizes this, it gets as far away from heaven as it can. But not out of animosity: it seems to be from a sense of humility, a sense of not being worthy of closeness to heaven. Yet heaven is aware of earth's action and comes down to earth. It pours itself into the earth, perhaps as rain, and the earth becomes fruitful.

Curiously, this story subverts the very principle Eckhart starts with. Though he says that opposites repel, in this case the opposites unite, and the result is life. This does not stop the opposites from being opposite. What heaven apparently loves in earth is its humility, its unstopppable

²⁷ For a different approach to this sermon, see Burkhard Mojsisch's commentary in *Lectura Eckhardi*, Vol. 1, pp. 156–62.

²⁸ DW 2, 413:1–414:8.

resolve to take the lowest place. Yet, by taking the lowest, earth wins the highest. Eckhart now applies these ideas to the practice of detachment:

In the same way I say about the person, who has negated himself in himself and in God and in all creatures: the person has taken the lowest place, and into the person God must pour himself completely, or else he is not God. I say it by good truth and by the eternal truth and by everlasting truth, that into such a person, who has abandoned himself to the ground, God must completely pour himself according to all his power, that he holds nothing back in all his life or in all his being or in all his nature or in all his divinity, he must pour it completely in a fruitful manner into the person who has abandoned himself for God and has taken the lowest place.²⁹

Someone who practices detachment does not think of himself in what he does and so treats himself as nothing. Like the earth, he takes the lowest place. But it is precisely in such a person that "God must pour himself completely."

Here questions arise. In the story, earth flees heaven because it thinks itself unworthy of being near it. Does this mean that the person practicing detachment must think of herself as unworthy of God? In that case, if you practice detachment because you want to be united with God, then deep down you think of yourself as worthy of God and thus cannot be practicing the kind of humble self-abandonment that Eckhart portrays as detachment. Pursuing union with God would be self-defeating. The truly detached person's humility would merely express her own understanding of herself and have no further goal. Why then would Eckhart say that such a person "has abandoned himself for God?" He could mean that such a person has a sense of humility thanks to his awareness of God or wants to serve God. But this need not mean a desire to be one with God.

Still, if this is the case, then what is Eckhart doing here? He seems to be telling an audience of people keenly interested in union with God what they need to do in order to attain it: abandon themselves, practice humility, take the lowest place. His rhythmic claim that God "holds nothing back in all his life or in all his being or in all his nature or in all his divinity" dramatically states the detached person's reward. Yet the story about earth implies that the detached person does not seek to become one with God but regards humility as her proper place, just as the earth is in its proper place. Eckhart stokes his audience's ambitions for union with God while also implicitly questioning those same ambitions.

²⁹ DW 2, 415:1-9.

This talk of God's union with the detached person leads Eckhart to offer an explanation of what union is:

When I came here today, I thought about how I could reasonably preach to you so that you would understand me well. Then I thought of a likeness, and if you can understand it well, then you will understand my meaning and the ground of all my views that I have ever preached about, and that was the likeness of my eye and of wood: if my eye is open, then it is an eye; if it is closed, then it is the same eye, and through vision the wood neither goes away nor approaches. Now pay close attention to me! But if it should happen that my eye is one and united in itself and is open and is thrown on to the wood with a glance, so each remains the same thing that it is, and yet in the activity of seeing they become as one, so that one may say in truth: eye-wood, and the wood is my eye. But if the wood were without material and it were as spiritual as the seeing of my eye, then one could say in truth, that in the activity of seeing the wood and my eye consisted in one being. If this is true of corporeal things, it is much more true of spiritual things. You should know that my eye has much more unity with a sheep's eye, that is across the sea and that I never saw, than the unity my eye has with my ears, with which it is yet one in being; and that is because the sheep's eye has the same activity that my eye also has; and therefore I give them more unity in activity than I give my eyes and my ears, for they are distinct in activities.³⁰

In this paragraph Eckhart offers an explanation of union. In fact, Eckhart offers two. The first unites the eye and the wood. The eye perceives the wood, and though they are separate things, they are united in the perceptual act. If the wood were not material, then there would be complete union between the eye and the wood. Eckhart is probably thinking in Aristotelian terms. Aristotle understood physical things as a combination of form and matter. When the eye perceives the wood, it grasps the form of the wood. The wood's matter ensures that it remains a separate object from the eye. If the wood were form alone, then the eye, in perceiving it, would grasp it in its totality and be united with it. The two would still be distinct, since they play different roles: the eye as perceiver, the wood as perceived. The act of perception unites the eye and the wood while leaving them separate things. This idea of union involves participation in the same activity rather than a fusion of being or identity.

Eckhart's second concept of union joins his eye with the sheep's eye. It is the activity of the eye, its seeing, that makes it an eye. For this reason, his eye has more in common with a sheep's eye, which has the same

³⁰ DW 2, 416:1–417:6.

function or activity, than it does with Eckhart's own ears, which like his eye belong to him but have a different function.

Eckhart now turns to God and the soul:

I have sometimes spoken of a light that is in the soul, that is uncreated and uncreatable. This light I touch on continually in my sermons, and this same light takes God without medium and without veil and naked, as he is in himself; that is, it takes him in the activity of begetting. So I can truly say that this light has more unity with God than it has unity with any power with which it is yet one in being. For you should know that this light is no nobler in the being of my soul than the lowest power or the grossest, such as hearing or seeing or another power, which can suffer from hunger or thirst, heat or cold; and that is because being is simple. Therefore, just as one takes the powers in the being, so are they all one and equally noble; but where one take the powers in their works, so is one much nobler and much higher than the others.³¹

Eckhart shifts from the eyes to a "light" in the soul. He does not identify this light, but his comments here resemble what he says about the intellect in other sermons, and in the next paragraph he talks about something that the light wants to "know." So let us suppose that the light is the intellect. Eckhart has already set up this paragraph with his example of the eye and the wood, and here he talks about the light's desire to "[take] God without medium . . . as he is in himself." This suggests that the light is analogous to the eye, and God to the wood. In knowing God "without medium," that is, directly, the intellect becomes one with God, though they also remain distinct. But in knowing God without medium, the light "takes him in the activity of begetting." Though "begetting" is often used by Christians to describe the Father's generation of the Son in the Trinity, it seems better in this case to treat "begetting" as also including creation, for reasons that will become obvious in the sermon's next paragraph. So the intellect, in knowing God naked, knows God in the activity of creating and thereby achieves union with God. Eckhart emphasizes that the intellect is a natural power of the soul, just like hearing or seeing, but its function makes it nobler.

In the final paragraph of the sermon, Eckhart develops the idea of the intellect's union with God in a radical way:

For this reason I say: if a person turns himself from himself and from all created things—to the extent that you do this, to this extent you will be united

³¹ DW 2, 418:1–11.

and blessed in the spark of the soul, which touches neither time nor place. This spark renounces all creatures and wants nothing but God naked, as he is in himself. It is not content with the Father or the Son or the Holy Ghost or the three persons in so far as each consists of his properties. I say truly, that the light is not content with the oneness of the fruitful manner of divine nature. I will say even more that sounds even more amazing: I say it in good truth and in the eternal truth and in everlasting truth, that this same light is not content with the simple unchanging divine being, that neither gives nor takes, rather: it wants to know where this being comes from; it wants to go into the simple ground, into the still desert, into which distinction never gazed, neither Father nor Son nor Holy Ghost; furthest inside, where no one is at home, there this light is content, and there it is more inward, than it can be in itself; for this ground is a simple stillness, which in itself is immovable, and from this immobility all things are moved and all lives are received that are living rationally in themselves.

That we may live rationally in this way, may the everlasting truth, which I have spoken of, help us. Amen.³²

This striking paragraph culminates the sermon. It revolves around two evocative images, the desert and the spark or light.

Eckhart begins the paragraph by returning to detachment: "if a person turns himself from himself and from all created things—to the extent that you do this, to this extent you will be united and blessed in the spark of the soul, which touches neither time nor place." The detached person places no importance in herself or in ordinary things and thereby becomes united with the spark in the soul. This makes sense as a comment on attention. If you stop caring about yourself or ordinary things, then you can focus on something else, in this case the spark or intellect. However, why does Eckhart say that the spark "touches neither time nor place?" Here are two possibilities. First, the spark is eternal. In saying that it touches neither time nor place, Eckhart describes the spark itself, which would make it eternal. If this reading is correct, then Eckhart would seem committed to a view of human beings as having an eternal aspect in addition to their lives in time. Second, one could interpret Eckhart as saying that it is the spark's activity that does not touch time or place. Instead, it reaches out to eternal things. In this sense the spark could still be in time, though it thinks about eternal realities. In my view, this second interpretation is more likely in the context of a sermon that addresses how its listeners should live their lives in time. Living a life of detachment allows one to think more seriously about eternal things.

³² DW 2, 419:1–421:5.

Next, Eckhart says that the spark “renounces all creatures and wants nothing but God naked, as he is in himself.” In being concerned with eternal things, the spark turns away from creatures, who exist in time. Instead, the spark wants God “as he is in himself.” The word “naked” is striking here. It suggests that the spark wants God shorn of all purely conventional descriptions, which are themselves created and temporal. Instead, it wants to know what God truly is, apart from the time-conditioned ways in which human beings think about God.

Eckhart then goes through various descriptions of God that the spark rejects, because they do not present God “as he is in himself.” Some are surprising, as Eckhart himself declares. First, the spark rejects the idea of God as the three persons of the Trinity with all their properties. Next, the spark rejects “the oneness of the fruitful manner of divine nature.” This phrase is obscure, but Eckhart seems to mean that the spark also rejects the idea of God as creator, especially if that creativity is understood as rooted in God’s nature. In other sermons, such as Pr. 52, Eckhart says that a conception of God primarily as creator defines God in terms of creatures and not in terms of what God actually is. So the spark rejects it too. We would seem to be left with the idea of a divine being, perfectly one, beyond the Trinity, not defined by any creation it supports, existing in a manner all its own unaffected by anything else, similar to Aristotle’s prime mover or the Neo-platonic One. But no, Eckhart says that the spark rejects this idea as well: “this same light is not content with the simple unchanging divine being, that neither gives nor takes, rather: it wants to know where this being comes from.” While it is surprising to think that a simple unchanging divine being could come from somewhere, nevertheless the spark moves that concept aside. It wants to go “into the simple ground, into the still desert.”

These rejections set up the discussion of the still desert by specifying what the still desert is not. It is not the Trinity, not the creator God, not unchanging divine being. Then what is it? Eckhart describes this simple ground or still desert as a place where “distinction never gazed” and where “no one is at home.” He says it is “immovable.” These descriptions are negative. They indicate absences: of parts, sound, life, distinction, persons, movement. Yet Eckhart brings back creation. From this desert “all things are moved and all lives are received that are living rationally in themselves.” This suggests that Eckhart is still concerned with the source of all things. Aquinas would say that this source is what all people call God. But Eckhart seems dissatisfied with this name. He retains the idea that

creatures are dependent, that creation takes place, but negates the idea that creation originates in some source that can be identified as God or being or a being. It is striking that after he mentions the spark's rejection of the Trinitarian God and divine being, he does not mention God again in the sermon. Even the closing prayer invokes "the everlasting truth" rather than God. Instead, Eckhart leaves us with the still desert, which moves all things without being God or even a being. One question is whether Eckhart intends the still desert to stand for anything at all. If it does, then this appears to be something completely beyond the reach of language. All we can say is that this whatever-it-is moves or creates all things. But perhaps the still desert does not refer to anything. Eckhart describes it so negatively in order to prevent interpreters from identifying it as anything whatsoever. In this reading, Eckhart uses his negations of the Trinity, God, and divine being in order to emphasize what the still desert does: move all things, that is, create. Eckhart would be drawing attention to the createdness and contingency of all things while trying to keep interpreters from asking what is responsible for their existence: there is nothing there to answer the question.

In either case, Eckhart says that the spark is "content" and "more inward" in the desert than it can be in itself. These are difficult claims to interpret. First, in what manner is the spark in the desert? Eckhart says that "distinction never gazed" there. Since he mentions "the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost," he would seem to have in mind primarily the distinctions among the persons of the Trinity. But if the spark is in the desert, and no distinction can be found there, then it would follow that the spark is not distinct from the desert, and the two enjoy an identity without distinction. In this case, the spark achieves complete identity with whatever the desert represents, if anything. There is a second possibility. Perhaps the spark is in the desert in the same way that the eye is united with the wood. Precisely by thinking about or knowing the desert, the spark, as the intellect concerned with eternal things, becomes united with it. This kind of union allows distinction between the two halves that are joined together. In this case, the spark is not actually in the desert but enjoys the kind of union in activity that Eckhart described in the middle of the sermon. The intellect reaches this kind of union with the desert only after working through and rejecting the various descriptions of God.

If you suppose that the spark is eternal, however, then these possibilities take on a new sense. If the spark is eternal, and if it is identical to the desert without distinction, then the soul contains this mysterious union

within itself from eternity. Or if the spark is one with the desert only in the activity of knowing it, then one must suppose that the soul possesses this knowledge from eternity. In either case, Eckhart's dramatic tale of the spark rejecting various descriptions of God until it finds contentment in the still desert is a fiction.

For my part, I interpret the spark as in time, not eternal, and the spark's presence in the desert as a union in activity, not an identity without distinction. So, in my view, Eckhart is talking about the intellect working through and discarding various descriptions of God. Ultimately it reaches a point, symbolized here by the still desert, when it has completely emptied out its notion of God. Even the name "God" drops out. All that is left is the activity God performs: creation, but creation now understood purely as event. Things are moved or created, but without any discernible creator or source. If there is one, it remains mysterious. In this way, Eckhart practices a kind of negative theology in this sermon. He implies that the existence of all things depends on something beyond our ability to conceptualize it. The intellect finds contentment in making this recognition. This recognition need not be any kind of extraordinary mystical experience. It could instead produce a change in attitude toward ordinary, created things, which would appear as the effects of mysterious creativity.

Let us now step back and consider the sermon as a whole. At first, with the story of heaven and earth, Eckhart seems to be saying that practicing detachment results in union with God. God pours all that God is into the detached person and holds nothing back "in all his life or in all his being or in all his nature or in all his divinity." This could motivate many people to practice detachment, though, as we saw, the heaven and earth story raises questions about whether it is really appropriate to pursue union with God. At the end of the sermon, Eckhart offers another reason for detachment: being united with the spark in the soul, the intellect, as it moves beyond all the various conventional descriptions of God and in the end acknowledges the unknowable mystery that gives rise to the existence of ordinary things. This passage has the curious effect of negating some of the same properties that earlier in the sermon Eckhart said God poured into the detached person: being, nature, and divinity. In this respect, the sermon works as a piece of apophatic discourse, as Michael A. Sells describes it. First, Eckhart sets out one route to union with God, via detachment. Then, with the still desert, he negates or unsays the conception of God implied in that description. The sermon also works as "appellative discourse:" it offers several images, such as heaven and earth, the

eye and the wood, the spark in the soul, and the still desert. Listeners and readers have to sort through them and try to figure out what they mean. If Burkhard Hasebrink is right, Eckhart does this deliberately in order to draw his listeners into the activity of interpreting and appropriating the images and ideas he puts in the sermon.

A prevalent theme of the sermon is the need to practice detachment, to stop desiring material things and being concerned with oneself. Yet the sermon appears to offer two inconsistent motives for doing so: achieving union with God, and achieving union with the spark in the soul that ultimately rejects God in favor of the still desert. The fact that Eckhart offers different and even inconsistent rationales for detachment may not matter. He could do this deliberately in order to connect with people at different levels. His discussion at the beginning of the sermon is more accessible and may interest more of his audience. For those who are ready to go further, he offers the brilliant description of the spark and the still desert.

As an event or performance, then, the sermon appears to be doing three things. First, it offers two different reasons for practicing detachment. Second, it develops a concept of union with God based on activity, specifically the activity of knowing, in contrast to concepts of union based on the fusion of two beings. And, third, it practices negative theology or apophatic discourse, by first making use of certain conventional descriptions of God and then by negating them in the image of the still desert. In this last respect in particular, the sermon radically dispenses with God as conventionally understood or described. Throughout the sermon, Eckhart heightens his listeners' interest and attention by repeatedly swearing by the eternal and everlasting truth that his statements are true and by warning his listeners where they should be surprised. However immediately comprehensible the rest of the sermon is, the final paragraph is suggestive rather than clear. It needs to be considered carefully, over time. Fortunately, Eckhart makes us want to do this by centering the passage on the haunting image of the still desert, "into which distinction never gazed" and "where no one is at home." Here, Eckhart is as much a poet as a theologian or philosopher.

Eckhart's sermons are compelling and challenging. They have to be read, considered, and read again. The brilliance of Eckhart's language, the daring of his ideas, and the personal warmth of his manner make the study of his sermons a pleasure.

MEISTER ECKHART'S UNDERSTANDING OF GOD

Markus Enders

The intention of the present chapter is to sketch the basic features of Meister Eckhart's understanding of God. Essentially, we shall follow the development of his thinking from its beginning, in order to demonstrate the continuity of the core of Eckhart's understanding of God. We shall conclude by summarizing the essential definitions of God as Meister Eckhart understands these.

1. THE UNDERSTANDING OF GOD IN ECKHART'S *DISCOURSES OF INSTRUCTION*

In the first chapter of his early *Discourses of Instruction*, Eckhart writes that the only reason why God bestows all his gifts is in order that he may bestow his own self.¹ Already in this passage, Eckhart maintains that there is a necessity on God's part to communicate himself to the human being who has become empty of his own will and is thus wholly receptive to God:

Where the human being in obedience goes out from that which is his own and lays aside that which is his, God *must* necessarily enter again there; for when a person does not will anything for himself, God *must* will for that person in the same way as He does for His own self. If I have expropriated myself of my will and laid it in the hand of my religious superior, and I will nothing for myself, God *must* will for me; and if He fails to do something for

¹ See Meister Eckhart, "Reden der Unterscheidung," in: *Die deutschen Werke* (= DW), ed. Josef Quint and Georg Steer, 5 vols (Stuttgart: 1958ff.), 278, 14–279, 2: "Wan got engibet keine gâbe noch nie gegap, daz man die gâbe hæte und dar ane geruowete; sunder alle die gâbe, die er ie gegap im himel und ûf erden, die gap er alle dar umbe, daz er éine gâbe gen möhte; daz was er selber. Mit disen gâben allen wil er uns bereiten zu der gâbe, diu er selber ist" ["For God gives no gift, nor has he ever given any gift, in order that one may possess the gift and rest in its possession. Rather, he gave all the gifts that he has ever given in heaven and on earth only in order that he could give one gift: and that is he himself. With all these gifts, he [only] wanted to prepare us for the gift that he himself is"]; see also DW V, 180, 10–181, 1: "Daz ist diu sache, daz uns got niht gegeben enmac alle zît, als wir ez biten. Ez gebrichet an im niht, wan im ist tûsentstunt gæher ze gebenne wan uns ze nemenne" ["This is also the reason why God cannot always give to us in accordance with what we request. The problem does not lie with him, since he is a thousand times quicker to give than we are to receive"].

me in this respect, He likewise fails to do it for Himself. This is how things are in every situation: where I will nothing for myself, God wills for me. Pay attention now! What does He will for me, when I will nothing for myself? Where I let go of myself, He *must* necessarily will for me everything that He wills for Himself, neither more nor less, and in the same way as He wills (it) for Himself. And if God were not to do this, then by the truth that God is, God would not be just—nor would He be God, (although) that is His natural being.²

As later texts by Eckhart show, however, this necessity is based in God's essential goodness or love.³ Since God is truly good, and being good consists in communicating oneself, giving a share ungrudgingly in one's own fullness, and pouring oneself out (*bonum est diffusivum sui*),⁴ God as the perfect good must be "the most communicative of all," that is to say, the pure gift of self. In his *Book of the Divine Consolation*, Eckhart expounds this self-communicating love of God in terms of Trinitarian theology: the perfect equality of the divine Son with the divine Father is the "ground" within the Godhead for the "birth" of the Holy Spirit as the divine being of pure love—which is the love of the divine Son for the divine Father. Selflessness, equality, and universality characterize this pure love of the perfect good, into which the human being who has become the son of God by grace is called to enter.⁵

² Ibid., DW V, 187, 1–188, 3: "Swâ der mensche in gehôrsame des sînen ûzgât und sich des sînen erwiget, dâ an dem selben muoz got von nôt wider ingân; wan sô einez im selber niht enwil, dem muoz got wellen glîcher wîs als im selber. Swenne ich mînes willen bin ûzgegangen in die hant mines prêlâten und mir selber niht enwil, dar umbe muoz mir got wellen, und versûmet er mich an dem teile, sô versûmet er sich selber. Alsô in allen dîngen, dâ ich mir niht enwil, dâ wil mir got. Nû merke! Waz wil er mir, dâ ich mir niht enwil? Dâ ich mich ane lâze, dâ muoz er mir von nôt wellen allez, daz er im selben wil, noch minner noch mêr, und mit der selben wîse, dâ er im mit wil. Und entæte got des niht, in der wârheit, diu got ist, sô enwære got niht gereht noch enwære got, daz sîn naturlich wesen ist." [The capitalization in the English translation is made for the sake of greater clarity.]

³ See Meister Eckhart, *Sermon* 5a, DW I, 81, 1: "'God is love,' for with his love he must love all creatures, whether or not they know this;" *ibid.*, 81, 3–9: "I will never ask God for his gift of 'grace,' nor will I thank him for his gift. For if I were worthy to receive his gift, he would be obliged to give it to me, whether or not he wished to do so. This is why I will not ask for him his gift, for he must give 'it,' but I shall ask him to make me worthy to receive his gift, and I shall thank him for being 'of such a nature' that he must give. This is why I say: 'God is love,' for he loves me with the love with which he loves himself; and anyone who would take this away from him would be taking away from him his whole divinity."

⁴ On the tradition-history of this philosophical adage, see Klaus Kremer, "Bonum est diffusivum sui. Ein Beitrag zum Verhältnis von Neuplatonismus und Christentum," *ANRW* 36, 2 (Berlin: 1987), 994–1032.

⁵ On this, see my detailed study: Markus Enders, "Das göttliche Wesen der Liebe im Verständnis Meister Eckharts," in Enders, *Gelassenheit und Abgeschiedenheit—Studien zur*

2. ECKHART'S DEFINITION OF GOD IN TERMS OF THE THEORY OF THE INTELLECT, AS THINKING THAT IS FREE OF BEING AND TRANSCENDS BEING (IN HIS FIRST *PARISIAN QUAESTIO*)

In his first *quaestio*, written during his first period as *magister* in Paris (1303–05), Eckhart discusses the traditional question about the relationship in God between being and knowing. Against the authoritative position put forward above all by Thomas Aquinas, who sees the highest definition of God and the basis of all other divine predicates as pure and self-subsisting Being, Eckhart effects an exact reversal of this foundational relationship in God: knowing is the proper and highest definition of God, and is therefore the basis of his Being. For Eckhart “no longer holds that God knows because he is; rather, because he knows, he is, in such a way that God is intellect and knowing, and knowing itself is the basis of Being itself.”⁶ By basing God's Being on God's thinking, Eckhart in the *Quaestio Par.* elevates thinking “to the highest and most proper definition of the absolute, on which all the other definitions that apply to God, including precisely his Being, are based.”⁷ As the biblical justification of his reversal of the traditional foundational relationship between Being and the Spirit, Eckhart adduces the first verse of the Johannine prologue, according to which not Being, but the Word is at the beginning of everything—but the Word, as a speaking and as a spoken word, must be related to the intellect, just like the truth, which is identified with the Logos in John 14:6.⁸ Eckhart also proposes philosophical reasons for this primacy of the intellect over

Deutschen Mystik (Hamburg: 2008), 77–97; on Meister Eckhart's Trinitarian doctrine, see Rainer Hauke, *Trinität und Denken. Die Unterscheidung der Einheit von Gott und Mensch bei Meister Eckhart* (Frankfurt am Main: 1986), 94–112, 115–33.

⁶ See Meister Eckhart, *Quaestio Par.* I, n. 4, in Meister Eckhart, *Die lateinische Werke* (= LW), ed. Albert Zimmermann and Loris Sturlese, 5 vols (Stuttgart: 1936ff.), 40, 5–7: “Tertio ostendo quod non ita videtur mihi modo, ut quia sit, ideo intelligat, sed quia intelligit, ideo est, ita quod deus est intellectus et intelligere et est ipsum intelligere fundamentum ipsius esse.” On this, see Ruedi Imbach, *Deus est intelligere. Das Verhältnis von Sein und Denken in seiner Bedeutung für das Gottesverständnis bei Thomas von Aquin und in den Pariser Quaestiones Meister Eckharts*, (Studia Friburgensia NF) 53 (Fribourg: 1976), 18: “Thinking is the basis of Being because God's thinking is the *causa* of reality.”

⁷ Jens Halfwassen, “Gibt es eine Philosophie der Subjektivität im Mittelalter? Zur Theorie des Intellekts bei Meister Eckhart und Dietrich von Freiberg,” *Theologie und Philosophie* 72 (1997), 338–60, see 343.

⁸ See Meister Eckhart, *Quaestio Par.* I, n. 4, LW V, 40, 7–12: “Quia dicitur Ioh. I: ‘in principio erat verbum, et verbum erat apud deum, et deus erat verbum.’ Non autem dixit evangelista: ‘in principio erat ens et deus erat ens.’ Verbum autem se toto est ad intellectum et est ibi dicens vel dictum et non esse vel ens commixtum. Item dicit salvator Ioh. 14: ‘ego sum veritas.’ Veritas autem ad intellectum pertinet importans vel includens relationem.”

Being: the knowledge of the intellect is uncreatable, while Being—as he infers from the *Liber de causis*—is the first creature. This is why God is intellect and knowing, not an existent or Being.⁹ Eckhart presents other reasons for this thesis of an identity between the absolute intellect and the pure knowing on the one hand and God on the other, and for a non-identity between God and (created) Being: since knowing is higher than Being, and has a different constitution,¹⁰ it follows that it must belong to God who is the embodiment of the unsurpassable. Eckhart employs a number of arguments to justify this thesis that knowing is superior to, and different from, Being. First, every natural cause of movement is either itself capable of knowledge or else derivable from an intelligent moving cause; and that which is earlier in the causal context is more perfect than that which is later. This is why knowing is more perfect than Being, and this means that since God is the highest, it is to him that we must ascribe knowledge as the first and highest level of all the perfections.¹¹ Secondly,

⁹ See Meister Eckhart, *Quaestio Par. I*, n. 4, LW V, 41, 6–14: “Unde dicit auctor *De causis*: ‘prima rerum creaturarum est esse.’ Unde statim cum venimus ad esse, venimus ad creaturam. Esse ergo habet primo rationem creabilis, et ideo dicunt *aliqui* quod in creatura esse solum respicit deum sub ratione causae efficientis, essentia autem respicit ipsum sub ratione causae exemplaris. Sapientia autem, quae pertinet ad intellectum, non habet rationem creabilis. . . . Et ideo deus, qui est creator et non creabilis, est intellectus et intelligere et non ens vel esse.” Here, Eckhart understands Being “in agreement with the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition—as the equivalent of ‘being determined,’ that is, of limitation. Accordingly, everything that is determined and limited in its Being is not of itself, but presupposes a determinative principle to which it owes its Being. Further, the principle of all determinations—the One, which Christian Platonism identifies with God—cannot itself be something determined, if it is to be the foundation of all determinations. Accordingly, it can no longer be an existent” (Halfwassen, “Gibt es eine Philosophie der Subjektivität im Mittelalter?” [note 7 above], 344). Imbach, *Deus est intellegere* (note 6 above), 167ff., has shown that in this context Eckhart attributes a threefold meaning to “Being:” being caused or founded, and therefore being dependent on God; being limited or finite; and being a substance, whereby Eckhart understands substance as form or being, and views the accidentals (following Dietrich of Freiberg) as devoid of Being. When Eckhart understands Being “precisely as an essential characteristic of that which is created, and thus as an indicator that something is founded” (Halfwasser, “Gibt es eine Philosophie der Subjektivität im Mittelalter?,” 344), this goes beyond the *Liber de causis* (an Arabic reworking of the *Stoicheiōsis theologikē* of Proclus) back to Proclus himself, where Being is the first to have its principle in the One. See Halfwassen, *ibid.*, 344 note 29.

¹⁰ See Meister Eckhart, *Quaest. Par. I*, n. 5, LW 5, 42, 1f.: “intelligere est altius quam esse et est alterius condicionis;” *ibid.*, n. 7, LW 5, 43, 6f.

¹¹ See Meister Eckhart, *Quaest. Par. I* n. 5, LW V, 42, 3–7: “Dicimus enim omnes quod opus naturae est opus intelligentiae. Et ideo omne movens est intelligens aut reducit ad intelligentiam, a quo in suo motu dirigitur. Et ideo habentia intellectum sunt perfectiora non habentibus, sicut in ipso fieri imperfecta tenent primum gradum, ita quod in intellectu et intelligente stat resolutio sicut in summo et perfectissimo. Et ideo intelligere est altius quam esse.” See also *ibid.*, n. 6, LW V, 43, 3–5: “Ego autem credo totum contrarium.

the act of knowing that is proper to the intellectual soul is of another constitution or nature than Being. Eckhart demonstrates this by means of the image that is known in the intellectual soul: this image as such is not the existent that it depicts, and thus is not an existent.¹² The third reason that Eckhart adduces for the unsurpassability, and thus the divinity, of knowing as against the inferiority, and thus the creatureliness, of Being is the impossibility for us human beings of imagining the manner of the divine knowing, thanks to the fundamental difference in the degree of perfection between divine and human knowing: whereas human knowing is a product of the existent by which it is caused, the existent is itself a product of the knowledge of God, by which it is caused: "And this is why all that is in God is above Being itself, and is wholly knowing."¹³

In the next step of his argument, Eckhart formulates reasons that prove that there is no existent and no Being in God. Nothing is of its nature present both in the true cause and in that which is caused. And since God is the only cause of all Being, Being is of its very nature not in God.¹⁴ Eckhart does however mention one significant qualification: he would not object if someone wanted to call knowing a Being, but Being is ascribed to God only via knowing.¹⁵

'In principio' enim 'erat verbum,' quod ad intellectum omnino pertinet, ut sic ipsum intelligere teneat primum gradum in perfectionibus, deinde ens vel esse."

¹² See Meister Eckhart, *Quaest. Par.* I, n. 7, LW V, 43, 6–44, 6: "Secundo accipio . . . Quae ergo ad intellectum pertinent, in quantum huiusmodi, sunt non-entia." Besides this, our intellect could imagine something fictitious, something that cannot at all exist as such in reality, such as a fire without fire's effective quality of warmth. See *ibid.*, 44, 7–9: "Intelligimus enim, quod deus non posset facere, ut intelligens ignem non intelligendo eius calorem; deus tamen non posset facere quod esset ignis et quod non calefaceret." On the lack of Being on the part of the *species intelligibilis*, i.e. of the image that is known, and Eckhart's theory of images that underlies this affirmation, see Imbach, *Deus est intellegere* (note 6 above), 179f.

¹³ See Meister Eckhart, *Quaest. Par.* I, n. 8, LW V, 44, 10–14: "Tertio accipio quod hic imaginatio deficit. Differt enim nostra scientia a scientia dei, quia scientia dei est causa rerum et scientia nostra est causata a rebus. Et ideo cum scientia nostra cadat sub ente, a quo causatur, et ipsum ens pari ratione cadit sub scientia dei; et ideo, quidquid est in deo, est super ipsum esse et est totum intelligere."

¹⁴ See Meister Eckhart, *Quaest. Par.* I n. 8, LW V, 45, 1–3: "Ex his ostendo quod in deo non est ens nec esse, quia nihil est formaliter in causa et causato, si causa sit vera causa. Deus autem est causa omnis esse. Ergo esse formaliter non est in deo." Behind this lies Eckhart's teaching about the true cause as the analogous cause: that which is caused is completely passive and needy, and is also preexistent intellectually in the cause of its Being. See Imbach, *Deus est intellegere* (note 6 above), 185f.

¹⁵ See Meister Eckhart, *Quaest. Par.* I, n. 8, LW V, 45, 3–5: "Et si tu intelligere velis vocare esse, placet mihi. Dico nihilominus quod, si in deo est aliquid, quod velis vocare esse, sibi competit per intelligere."

Since God is the principle either of Being itself or of that which exists, he cannot himself be Being or an existent, since the principle can never also be that which it brings forth, something that owes its existence to the principle.¹⁶ There is indeed a preexistence of creatures in God—not however with their creaturely Being, but in their divine Being that is the exemplary cause. This is why the (creaturely) Being does not exist in God, but rather the “purity of Being” that was expressed in the divine name revealed in Ex. 3:14, “I am who I am.”¹⁷ The mode of Being in the Godhead of every creaturely existent, in the manner of an exemplary cause, is the mode of the (divine) intellect and of the (divine) knowing itself, not the mode of the created existent.¹⁸

Eckhart also justifies his thesis that God is not an existent, but something higher than the existent, namely intellect and knowing, by appealing to the Aristotelian theorem of the indeterminateness of the intellect (which is passive in Aristotle), which is capable of receiving all forms and precisely for this reason must itself be essentially indeterminate, and therefore infinite.¹⁹ The reason for this indeterminateness of the passive

¹⁶ See Meister Eckhart, *Quaest. Par.* I, n. 9, LW V, 45, 6–8: “principium nunquam est principiatum, ut punctus nunquam est linea. Et ideo cum deus sit principium vel scilicet ipsius esse vel entis, deus non est ens vel esse creaturae.” Eckhart draws here on the fundamental proposition of the theory of principles, repeatedly formulated in the metaphysics of Plato, the Academy, Aristotle, and Neoplatonism, that the principle is the zero sum of those things of which it is the principle. On this, see Halfwassen, “Gibt es eine Philosophie” (note 7 above), 343 n. 38 (with the individual passages from the tradition); on the difference between the principle as pure thinking and that of which it is the principle as Being, see Imbach, *Deus est intellegere* (note 6 above), 187f.

¹⁷ See Meister Eckhart, *Quaest. Par.* I, n. 9, LW V, 45, 9–15: “Et ideo cum esse conveniat creaturis, non est in deo nisi sicut in causa, et ideo in deo non est esse, sed puritas essendi. Sicut quando quaeritur de nocte ab aliquo, qui vult latere et non nominare se: quis es tu? respondet: ‘ego sum qui sum,’ ita dominus volens ostendere puritatem essendi esse in se dixit: ‘ego sum qui sum.’ Non dixit simpliciter ‘ego sum,’ sed addidit: ‘qui sum.’ Deo ergo non competit esse, nisi talem puritatem voces esse.”

¹⁸ See Meister Eckhart, *Quaest. Par.* I, n. 10, LW V, 46, 2–6: “Cum igitur deus sit universalis causa entis, nihil quod est in deo, habet rationem entis, sed habet rationem intellectus et ipsius intelligere, de cuius ratione non est, quod causam habeat, sicut est de ratione entis quod sit causatum; et in ipso intelligere omnia continentur in virtute sicut in causa suprema omnium.”

¹⁹ See Meister Eckhart, *Quaest. Par.* I, n. 12, LW V, 47, 14–48, 4: “Sic etiam dico quod deo non convenit esse nec est ens, sed est aliquid altius ente. Sicut enim dicit *Aristoteles* quod oportet visum esse abscolorem, ut omnem colorem videat, et intellectum non esse formarum naturalium, ut omnes intelligat, sic etiam ego <nego> ipsi deo ipsum esse et talia, ut sit causa omnis esse et omnia prae habeat, ut sicut non negatur deo quod suum est, sic negetur eidem <quod suum non est>.” On this, see Halfwassen, “Gibt es eine Philosophie” (note 7 above), 344: “For the intellect is capable of knowing every determinateness. But in order to be able to know every determinateness, it must be able to receive them all in the

intellect—or for its purity and passivity, or for its receptivity and ability to receive all forms—is its lack of Being, or its freedom from matter.²⁰

Eckhart sees the refusal to ascribe any creaturely forms of Being to the divine intellect as a genuine statement of negative theology, which, like negative theology as a whole, is in reality a superabundantly affirmative statement about God, since it does not deny to him anything that would be his by nature, but merely asserts “that he contains everything in himself antecedently in purity, fullness, and perfection, more amply and more broadly, since he is the root and cause of all things.”²¹ The mode of this eternal, preexistent antecedent possession of all things by God is the mode of absolute thinking: this is what Eckhart indicates at the end of the first Parisian *quaestio* when he appeals to God’s self-revelation in Ex. 3:14: “I am who I am.” For the revealed divine name “I am who I am” gives expression to the purity, fullness, and perfection of the divine Being as absolute Spirit and absolute knowing.²²

Eckhart interprets this self-affirmation by God even more strongly and radically in his commentary on the book of Exodus.

act of knowing. Accordingly, it cannot for its own part be something determinate, that is to say, something fixed in its determinateness. Rather, it must essentially be indeterminate, and that in turn means: infinite. As that which receives all determinate things in the act of knowing, the intellect must essentially be free of every objective determinateness, just as the sense of sight, which recognizes all the colors, is itself free of color according to Aristotle (*De anima* 418 b 27). This is why knowing as such—that is, not only the divine act of knowing, but our knowing too—is uncreated, and indeed essentially uncreatable: *Sapientia autem, quae pertinet ad intellectum, non habet rationem creabilis*. For creating means positing an existent, i.e., something determinate. This means that it is impossible to think of the act of knowing, which is the essentially indeterminate activity of the positing and receiving of determinateness, as itself creatable, for then it would be essentially determinate. This is the basis of Eckhart’s teaching about the uncreatedness of the reason . . . at the same time, it already shows that Eckhart’s discovery that subjectivity is a principle which does not remain restricted to God, but concerns reason as such.” On the uncreatedness of the intellect, see also Imbach, *Deus est intellegere* (note 6 above), 173 n. 87, 197f., and 182f.: since the act of knowing is a participation in the eternal ideas of exemplary causes of the creatures in God, it cannot be created.

²⁰ On this, see the detailed remarks by Imbach, *Deus est intellegere* (note 6 above), 173–77.

²¹ See Meister Eckhart, *Quaes. Par.* I, n. 12, LW V, 48, 4–8: “Quae negationes secundum Damascenus primo libro habent in deo superabundantiam affirmationis. Nihil igitur nego deo, ut sibi natum est convenire. Dico enim quod deus omnia prae-habet in puritate, plenitudine, perfectione, amplius et latius, existens radix et causa omnium.”

²² See Meister Eckhart, *Quaest. Par.* I, n. 12, LW V, 48, 8: “Et hoc voluit dicere, cum dixit: ‘ego sum qui sum.’”

3. GOD'S NAME "EGO SUM QUI SUM" (EX. 3:14) AS THE "NEGATION OF THE NEGATION" OR AS A REFLEXIVE SELF-AFFIRMATION BY GOD

Eckhart justifies (against Moses Maimonides) the possibility of the Trinitarian mode of Being of the essentially one God on the basis of a theory of relationships, and then develops in his *Commentary on Exodus* his so-called "Exodus metaphysics," that is, his interpretation of the divine name "Ego sum qui sum" revealed in Ex. 3:14 as the perfect fullness of the divine Being. He interprets this fullness of Being as reflexive self-communication or pure self-affirmation, since it is an act of Trinitarian self-knowledge. Since the truth of an affirmative proposition consists in general in the identity of its *termini*,²³ the self-affirmation that is the fullness of pure Being itself is characteristic of God; it is this self-affirmation that utters itself in his name "I am who I am."²⁴ This is why this tautological sentence is the truest of all sentences.²⁵ Eckhart also calls this intellectual self-positing and self-affirmation of God the "negation of the negation," since it is a pure and utterly complete self-affirmation that abolishes all the limitations, and thus every negativity, of the creaturely existent: "I am who I am."²⁶ For in this self-reflexive act, God returns in a perfect act of

²³ See Meister Eckhart, *In Exodum*, n. 73, LW II, 75, 16–17: "veritas affirmative propositionis universaliter consistit in identitate terminorum."

²⁴ See *ibid.*, n. 74, LW II, 76, 13–77, 4.

²⁵ See *ibid.*, n. 74, LW II, 77, 5.

²⁶ See *ibid.*, n. 74, LW II, 77, 9–12: "Nulla ergo negatio, nihil negativum deo competit, nisi negatio negationis, quam significat unum negative dictum: 'deus unus est,' Deut. 6; Gal 3. Negatio vero negationis purissima et plenissima est affirmatio: 'ego sum qui sum.'" On Eckhart's understanding of the meaning of this self-affirmation by God, see Werner Beierwaltes, "Deus est esse—esse est Deus," in *Platonismus und Idealismus*, ed. Werner Beierwaltes, Philosophische Abhandlungen 40 (Frankfurt am Main: 1972), 47–58, esp. 58: "According to Eckhart's interpretation, therefore, the proposition 'I am who I am' affirms that God is pure Being, pure substance, pure (self-)affirmation, self-reflection, self-utterance, and self-penetration. The fact that God is pure Being implies all the other designations, or else these are the self-unfolding of Being as identity (unity) in the Trinity." On the precise meaning of the "negation of the negation" as the essential act of the divine Spirit, see Halfwassen, "Gibt es eine Philosophie" (note 7 above), 345ff.: "In himself, however, as the principle that posits all determinations—here in agreement with Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite—God is the negation of all determinations. For Eckhart, therefore, precisely as this negating activity, God is intellect.... Intellectuality is therefore the pure essence of the Absolute, which must be understood in the tradition of negative theology as the denial of determinations—that is, the denial of every existent—but in such a way that this negation is the specific activity of the Absolute itself, the activity that is proper to the Absolute in itself. This denial expresses, not a lack of Being, but the superabundance of the super-existent Absolute. This is why Eckhart... expounds it as the 'superabundance of affirmation.'... Eckhart now interprets this pure fullness of Being as the pure self-relationship and self-communication that is antecedent to every objective Being and constitutes it—as original

returning to his own self, as Eckhart states in agreement with the *Liber de causis*.²⁷

Since he is Being itself, God can neither deny himself nor refuse himself to another, since the First is rich through its own self. In other words, it brings forth everything else ungrudgingly and selflessly out of the superabundance of its self-communicating essence. Eckhart repeatedly quotes the fundamental proposition in the *Liber de causis* that the First is rich through its own self.²⁸ He justifies this by appealing to the perfect fullness

intellectuality. . . . For every existent that is fixed in its determination is a limitation, and thus the negation of the unrestricted fullness of Being; and hence God, who is himself the pure fullness, is, as the negation of every finite existent, himself the negation of the negation. As pure and absolute affirmation, he is the abolition of all restrictions." On the provenance of the "negatio negationis" in Eckhart from adumbrations in Thomas Aquinas and especially in Henry of Ghent, see Wouter Goris, *Einheit als Prinzip und Ziel. Versuch über die Einheitsmetaphysik des Opus tripartitum Meister Eckharts*, (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters) 59 (Leiden: 1997), 197–206, esp. 200 (on Thomas Aquinas): "In this context, Thomas draws a distinction between the negation that is contained in the concept of multiplicity from the negation in the concept of unity. In the multiplicity, the things are distinguished by denial, which contains a real negation: it is not said of the one thing that it is the other thing. This distinction through negation denies the negation contained in the One, which is purely conceptual." On Henry of Ghent as Eckhart's source, see *ibid.*, 203: "In Henry, therefore, the *negatio negationis* serves to allow the unity as something posited in the divine. This entails the denial that God possesses something that it is in the truest sense his work to eliminate. The attribution of unity to God is thought of in terms of the model of something added to the existent. Here, the *negatio negationis* forms the explication of an *indivisio* that is predicated of the One as an additional *modus significandi*. Later, in the *Summa*, in response to the objection that 'the One' is employed not as a positive but as a private designation in the Godhead, the position of the *negatio negationis* will once again be affirmed as the *verissima positio*."

²⁷ See Meister Eckhart, *In Exodum*, n. 74, LW II, 77, 12–78, 1: "Super se ipsum 'redit reditione completa.' . . .;" cf. *Liber de causis*, prop. 15 (§14; 79, ed. Adriaan Pattin), cf. prop. 7 (§6; 61f., ed. Adriaan Pattin). On this, see Halfwassen, "Gibt es eine Philosophie" (note 7 above), 348: "Eckhart thus thinks of the Absolute as the absolute reflexive self-communication, which of itself, out of its own superabundant fullness, posits its own Being, and is hence pure or absolute spontaneity. This is why God is originally intellectuality, since it is only thinking that is characterized by reflexive self-communication . . . This means that Eckhart has substantially anticipated the basic idea of speculative Idealism: the idea of the pure subjectivity that posits itself out of absolute spontaneity and communicates itself to itself." This had already been affirmed by Walter Schulz, *Der Gott der neuzeitlichen Metaphysik*, 5th ed. (Pfullingen: 1974), 13, and by Beierwaltes, "Deus est esse" (note 26 above), 47: "The conception of the concept of God that can be seen here, namely that God's Being is his thinking and that his thinking is his Being, makes substantially possible the basic idea of an Idealistic speculative theology, namely, that the Absolute understands itself as its Being and its idea and thus is absolute reflexive self-communication."

²⁸ On Eckhart's frequent recourse to the *Liber de causis*, see the summary remarks by Werner Beierwaltes, "Primum est dives per se. Meister Eckhart und der *Liber de causis*," in *On Proclus and his Influence in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. E.P. Bos and P.A. Meijer (Leiden: 1992), 141–69, see 144: "Where Meister Eckhart draws on the *Liber de causis* for the explanation, clarification, and authoritative support of ideas, these ideas direct and determine

of Being of the First, which cannot refuse itself to another and hence must communicate its own self.²⁹ For the only gift and work that are divine are those that are not given for the sake of a recompense nor sold, but are given purely and honestly, that is to say, free of charge, as Eckhart writes, long before the insights of modern phenomenology (and especially of Jean-Luc Marion) into the theory of gifts.³⁰ The only thing that God refuses or denies is “nothing,” since the affirmation belongs to Being and thus is proper to God as such.³¹ The affirmation possesses Being and includes Being, as can be seen clearly from the use of the copulative “is” in all affirmative propositions.³² However, Eckhart resolutely underlines that the affirmation of God’s own self and the pure giving of himself to something else without any ulterior motive does not contradict the rejection of affirmative divine predicates by representatives of negative theology such as Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Augustine: for in fact, the perfections of Being such as goodness, truth, life, knowing, and so on belong to God, though not (as Eckhart emphasizes, following Thomas Aquinas) with regard to the creaturely way in which these are defined.³³

his thinking: they concern his teaching about God’s Being and his unity in himself, and equally God’s creative working *ad extra*, the Being and activity of the divine ground and origin *in* Being, or his teaching about the soul as a movement that grasps itself reflexively. Most frequently, Meister Eckhart quotes *propositio 20* of the *Liber de causis*: ‘*Primum est dives per seipsum*’ in the form: ‘*Primum est dives per se.*’”

²⁹ See Meister Eckhart, *In Exodum*, n. 74, LW II, 78, 3–8; on this creative self-outpouring of the First, see Beierwaltes, “*Primum est dives per se*” (note 28 above), 145f.

³⁰ See Meister Eckhart, *In Exodum*, n. 75, LW II, 78, 9–11: “*Iuxta quod notandum quod illa datio sive donum proprie divinum est et universaliter operatio et opus, quod gratis fit. Quod enim non gratis fit, sed pro mercede, non datur nec donatur, sed venditur, simonia est.*” On the Platonic and Neoplatonic sources of the ideas of the goodness of the First Principle that pours itself out ungrudgingly, and on the definition (borrowed from Aristotle’s *Politics*) of the rich person in terms of giving rather than of receiving, see Beierwaltes, “*Primum est dives per se*” (note 28 above), 146f.; on this whole topic, see *ibid.*, 148: “This free giving of Being as existence, the establishing and forming of individual existents and the preserving of each existing form is linked directly and strongly by Meister Eckhart, in a convergence of propositions from the *Liber de causis* that derive from the *dives*-proposition, with the definition of this giving that is characteristic of the Christian faith: since the First, or God, is rich through his own self, ‘he gives all things to every one free of charge’ (*gratis dat omnibus omnia*). When God generously gives life, allows it to exist, is its ground, and preserves it, this is an act of his *grace*, and hence an expression of God’s free and active turning towards that which is created, an act free of all obligation.”

³¹ See Meister Eckhart, *In Exodum*, n. 77, LW II, 80, 9–10: “*Patet igitur quod affirmatio, utpote ad esse pertinens, propria est deo et divinorum, in quantum divina sunt.*”

³² See *ibid.*, 80, 11–81, 1: “*Ratio est breviter quae supra, quia affirmatio esse habet et includit. Li est enim medium est omnium affirmatarum, vel in ipsum resolvuntur.*”

³³ See *ibid.*, 81, 3–82, 5.

Let me sum up: Eckhart interprets the divine name "Ego sum qui sum" that is revealed in Ex. 3:14 as the self-relationship and self-communication of the absolute Spirit, antecedent to every objective existent, as perfect Being. This has the character of a negation of the negation of every finite existent and thus of the abolition of all limitations, or the character of a pure and absolute self-affirmation.

This means that Meister Eckhart's so-called Exodus metaphysics presupposes a priori the identification of God or of the absolute Spirit with perfect Being. This may appear to contradict what he says in the first Parisian *Quaestio* about the Being-lessness of the divine intellect; but the next section on Meister Eckhart's so-called "metaphysics of the transcendentals" will show that this contradiction is only apparent.

4. GOD IS BEING (DEUS EST ESSE)—ECKHART'S METAPHYSICS OF THE TRANSCENDENTALS

In the *Prologus generalis* to the *Opus tripartitum*, most probably composed as early as 1305,³⁴ Eckhart sketches the basic outlines of a metaphysics of the transcendentals. The starting point is the principal thesis of the "Tripartite work" as a whole, namely: "*esse est Deus*." This is the opening of the "work on the theses" and runs like a leitmotiv through Eckhart's scriptural commentaries. He attempts to demonstrate this principal thesis by means of numerous arguments, such as the impossibility of thinking the opposite,³⁵ or on the basis of the understanding of creation as the gift or communication of Being *ex nihilo*. Since only Being itself can communicate Being—that is to say, create—it follows that if God were not identical with Being itself, he could not be the Creator either, and then nothing would exist.³⁶ As Being itself, God creates always, or unceasingly; and he creates everything "in the beginning," that is to say, in his own self.³⁷ In this context, Being, which is unrestricted in its perfection, is indeed called

³⁴ See Loris Sturlese, "Meister Eckhart in der Bibliotheca Amploniana. Neues zur Datierung des 'Opus tripartitum,'" (Miscellanea Mediaevalia) 23 (1995), 434–46.

³⁵ See Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in Opus tripartitum*, n. 12, LW I, 156.

³⁶ See *ibid.*, n. 12, LW I, 157, 7–10: "ante esse est nihil. Propter quod conferens esse creat et creator est. Creare quippe est dare esse ex nihilo. Constat autem quod omnia habent esse ab ipso esse, sicut omnia sunt alba ab albedine. Igitur si esse est aliud a deo, creator erit aliud quam deus."

³⁷ See *ibid.*, n. 17f., LW I, 160.

the essence of God, from which the real existence of God follows as an eternal truth.³⁸ Being is the reality or the act and the perfecting of all things, including the forms.³⁹

Eckhart's teaching about the transcendentals occupies a unique position in medieval thinking.⁴⁰ It is characterized by the duplication of the *termini generales* into *abstracta* (*unitas*, *veritas*, and *bonitas*) and *concreta* (*unum*, *verum*, and *bonum*)⁴¹ and by the equation of these terms with God. Besides this, the reciprocally convertible universal concepts are also identified by Eckhart with the "universal perfections" such as wisdom and justice.⁴² Eckhart draws a fundamental distinction between the divine, absolute Being and the created, particular Being of "this and that" (*hoc et hoc*).⁴³ In Eckhart's metaphysics of the transcendentals, the perspective of his teaching about God has indeed shifted somewhat in comparison to the first Parisian *Quaestio* that we looked at above, but this does not result in a self-contradiction, since the "Being" that Eckhart refused to ascribe to God in the first Parisian *Quaestio* was only creaturely Being, the Being of "this and that," and the "purity of Being" ascribed to God in this *Quaestio* is identical with the Being that Eckhart has in mind here in the *Opus tripartitum*. The difference—not an antithesis—between the two concepts of God lies in the grounding of the Being of God in his knowing, a position taken in the *Quaestio* but not in the *Opus tripartitum*.

³⁸ See *ibid.*, n. 8, LW I, 159, 4–5: "Sed esse est essentia dei sive deus. Igitur deum esse verum aeternum est. Igitur deus est." See also *ibid.*, n. 20, LW I, 164, 6: "esse est deus per essentiam."

³⁹ See *ibid.*, n. 8, LW I, 153, 7–8: "Ipsum enim esse comparatur ad omnia sicut actus et perfectio et est ipsa actualitas omnium, etiam formarum."

⁴⁰ Jan A. Aertsen, "Der 'Systematiker' Eckhart," in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt*, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 32 (Berlin: 2005), 189–230.

⁴¹ See *ibid.*, n. 4, LW I, 150. See Chapter Five in this volume on Eckhart's doctrine of transcendentals.

⁴² On Eckhart's identification of God with justice, See, e.g. DW II, 252, 1–253, 2.

⁴³ On *hoc et hoc* as the designation of spatial-temporal or creaturely individual existence in Eckhart, see Beierwaltes, "Deus est esse" (note 26 above), 58, esp. note 23 (with numerous textual references).

5. THE JUSTIFICATION OF THE UNITY OF GOD IN TERMS OF THE THEORY OF THE INTELLECT IN ECKHART'S LATIN SERMON XXIX, "DEUS UNUS EST," AND ITS SOURCE IN MOSES MAIMONIDES

5.1 *The Omnipresence and the Omni-Unity of God—Unity as the Proper, Essential Name of God, as the Specificum of the Divine Nature*

The 29th Latin sermon, *Deus unus est*,⁴⁴ begins with a number of traditional passages that refer to the so-called ontological concept of God—he quotes Anselm, Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Seneca—according to which God is the absolutely unsurpassable.⁴⁵ Eckhart quite correctly infers infinite simplicity from this rational concept of God. From infinite simplicity, he next infers the total omnipresence or the universal immanence of God in everything else:⁴⁶ God alone descends into the essence of all things. He alone is in the innermost sphere of every creature, and in his unity he is without differentiation from all things.⁴⁷ Because of its unrestrictedness, the unity of God is at the same time "omni-unity," a perfect fullness of Being that includes everything. As such, it lacks nothing and is impassible.⁴⁸ This One is the fundamental goal or the ultimate *raison d'être* of the love of every creature, and especially of the rational creature. This means that human beings love the perfect Being, the power, the wisdom, and the perfect goodness of God only for the sake of his unity and in order to be united to this unity.⁴⁹ For the One is "higher, earlier, and simpler than the good and is closer to Being and to God. Or rather, in accordance with its name, it is one Being with Being itself."⁵⁰ Accordingly, the unity of God is not higher than God's perfect Being. This makes it clear that Eckhart is not undertaking a henological reduction of Being to

⁴⁴ On the construction of the argumentation in this sermon, see Goris, *Einheit als Prinzip und Ziel* (note 26 above), 82–88.

⁴⁵ See Meister Eckhart, *Sermo XXIX*, LW IV, 263, 5–12.

⁴⁶ See *ibid.*, n. 296, LW IV, 263, 13f.: "Deus simplicitate est infinitus et infinitate sua est simplex. Ideo et ubique est et ubique totus est. Ubiq̃ue infinitate, sed totus ubiq̃ue simplicitate."

⁴⁷ See *ibid.*, n. 297, LW IV, 264, 1–3: "Deus solus illabatur omnibus entibus, ipsorum essentiis. Nihil autem aliorum illabatur alteri. Deus est in intimis cuiuslibet et solum in intimis, et ipse solus *unus est*."

⁴⁸ See *ibid.*, n. 297, LW IV, 264, 8.11.

⁴⁹ See *ibid.*, n. 297, LW IV, 264, 4–7. 12f.

⁵⁰ See *ibid.*, n. 299, LW IV, 266, 4–6: "unum altius est, prius est et simplicius est ipso bono et immediatius ipsi esse et deo aut potius iuxta nomen suum unum esse ipsi esse sive cum ipso esse."

the unity in the Absolute. Rather, what he does is to present the character of unity of the divine Being and its simplicity. In Eckhart's metaphysics of the transcendentals, therefore, unlike in philosophical Neoplatonism, the unity of God is not a unity higher than Being, but the unity of God's Being.⁵¹

According to this sermon, however, the One is also the ground that brings forth all multiplicity while remaining immutable in itself and leading everything back to itself, in accordance with the triadic law of movement of the absolute Spirit, which is conceived in Neoplatonic terms—remaining in itself, going forth, and returning.⁵²

5.2 *Eckhart's Justification of the Unity of God in Terms of the Theory of the Intellect, with Recourse to Moses Maimonides: Unity as the Specificum of the (Absolute) Intellect*

The systematic center of gravity of the elements of the metaphysics of unity that are unfolded in this sermon lies in their location in the theory of the intellect, which Eckhart underlines in a particularly pronounced manner. He regards unity or the One as the *specificum* and the specific property of the intellect alone.⁵³ Eckhart justifies this equation of radical simplicity with pure intellect by means of a henological reduction:⁵⁴ the

⁵¹ On the convertibility of unity and Being in God, see Werner Beierwaltes, "‘Und daz Ein machet uns saelic.’ Meister Eckharts Begriff der Einheit und der Einung," in *Platonismus im Christentum*, ed. Werner Beierwaltes, Philosophische Abhandlungen 73 (Frankfurt am Main: 1998), 100–29, see 117: "The unity of God is his pure Being; the pure Being of God is his (true) unity." On this, see also Goris, *Einheit als Prinzip und Ziel* (note 26 above), 86: "This immediacy of the relationship between the One and Being signifies the characteristic of the transcendent One, which is interchangeable with the divine Existent, but expounds this divine Existent as purity and fullness, thus showing that it is Thinking." On the classification of this position of Eckhart, see *ibid.*, 88: "Eckhart's intention in *Sermo* 29 should not be judged henological, but rather as critical of the henological tradition, since unity, Being, and thinking are placed on one and the same level."

⁵² See Meister Eckhart, *Sermo* XXIX, n. 299, LW IV, 266, 7–10.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, n. 300, LW IV, 266, 11–12: "unitas sive unum videtur proprium et proprietates intellectus solius."

⁵⁴ Unlike Goris, *Einheit als Prinzip und Ziel* (note 26 above), 83, I would call this first line of argument for unity as a specific property of the absolute intellect, not an ontological, but a henological reduction since it has the character of a *reductio* of forms of unity that per se are composite into a unity that is no longer composite, namely the unity of Being and essence, or of Being and thinking. The second *reductio*, which Goris calls "henological" (*Einheit als Prinzip und Ziel*, 84), seems to me rather to have the character of a noological reduction, since it excludes everything that possesses no thinking and everything that possesses a Being outside its thinking. With this proviso, I agree with Goris's description of the structure and the outcome of both *reductiones* (*Einheit als Prinzip und Ziel*, 84): "These two *reductiones* resemble one another, since both are based on a threefold hierarchical

material entities are composed of form and matter, and are thus not a pure unity, but only a multiplicity that is united to form a *compositum*. It is only the immaterial, intellectual essences that are perfectly simple, since they are composed of Being and essence, or of Being and thinking. God is wholly intellect, not composite, a perfectly simple intellect, since in him thinking and Being are absolutely identical.⁵⁵ As Eckhart states in a later passage, identity is unity.⁵⁶ This means that, unlike the philosophical Neoplatonism of a Plotinus or a Proclus, Eckhart understands the unity of God not as a transcendence that lies beyond Being, thinking, and identity, but as the identity of pure Being and pure thinking.

Eckhart's second line of argumentation for unity as the specific property of the divine intellect has the character of a noological *reductio*. Here, Eckhart shows that God possesses no Being outside his thinking. Rather, he possesses unity as the identity of thinking and Being. He is thus pure and uncreatable intellect.⁵⁷

Since God is nothing other than pure intellect, it was only through the intellect that he gave all the creatures existence. The unity proper to God is therefore "nowhere and never anywhere else than in the intellect, and here too it is not, but is thought."⁵⁸ Accordingly, God's unity is realized in his being spirit, which is identical with God. In another passage in the same sermon, Eckhart expresses, with a clarity that could scarcely be stronger, this conviction that God's simple essence is spirit and nothing else than spirit: "The one God is intellect and the intellect is the one God. This is why God is never and nowhere God other than in the intellect."⁵⁹ We can grasp the particular radicality and the significance of Eckhart's

structure: the ontological *reductio* is based on the hierarchy of material, composite immaterial, and divine, while the henological *reductio* is based on a hierarchy of intellect-less, composite intellectual, and God. The ontological *reductio* shows that God possesses no thinking alongside his Being, while the henological *reductio* shows that he possesses no Being alongside his thinking. But both *reductiones* lead to the same outcome: God is one whose Being is his thinking."

⁵⁵ See Meister Eckhart, *Sermo XXIX*, n. 300, LW IV, 266, 12–267, 5, esp. 267, 3–5: "Unde signanter dictum est: *deus tuus deus unus est*, deus Israel, deus videns, deus videntium, qui scilicet intelligit et solo intellectu capitur, qui est intellectus se toto."

⁵⁶ Ibid., n. 303, LW IV, 269, 12–13: "Identitas est enim unitas."

⁵⁷ See ibid., n. 301, LW IV, 267, 6–268, 6, esp. 268, 4–6: "Patet ergo manifeste quod deus est proprie solus et quod ipse est intellectus sive intelligere et quod solum intelligere praeter esse aliud simpliciter."

⁵⁸ Ibid., n. 303, LW IV, 269, 3–5: "quod nusquam est et nunquam nisi in intellectu, nec est, sed intelligitur."

⁵⁹ Ibid., n. 304, LW IV, 270, 1–3: "Deus enim unus est intellectus, et intellectus est deus unus. Unde deus nunquam et nusquam est ut deus nisi in intellectu."

substantial and conceptual identification of the perfect simplicity, or of God's own simple essence, with the absolute spirit when we look at the Platonic and Neoplatonic history of the Western metaphysics of Spirit. Here, the conviction reigns that a distinction (at least in terms of relationship) or a bipolarity of the thinker and that which is thought, and thus a structure of difference, is constitutive of being spirit, and that the simplest (because most unified) epiphenomenon of this structure of difference is realized in the act whereby the absolute spirit knows itself. This means that the self-reflection of the absolute spirit does not constitute a simplicity devoid of relationship and difference: the absolute spirit is not substantially and conceptually identical with the One as the ground that brings it forth. Rather, the absolute spirit is the first going forth of this ground from itself, and at the same time the return or homecoming to itself, the primal act whereby this ground sees itself, as Plotinus explains. Almost the entire tradition of Christian theology prior to Eckhart—especially Marius Victorinus, Augustine, Boethius, and John Scotus Eriugena, as well as thinkers in the Greek tradition such as Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite—had attempted to link in a speculative manner the unity (as the essential definition of the first principle) with the Trinitarian, three-personal life of this first principle, drawing a distinction here between the simple essence of God that is common to the three divine persons and the hypostases or personal relationships that are relationally distinct from each other. There can be no doubt that Eckhart's definition of the relationship between God's being spirit and the unity of God lies within this Christian tradition that is inspired by Platonism and Neoplatonism; but his radicality goes beyond this tradition, since he identifies the perfect simplicity of God with the act of self-knowledge that is most particularly God's own act. Indeed, he describes this unity as based not in the divine Being but in the divine act of knowing, in an act of self-knowledge that is necessarily devoid of differences and objects and thus exists only in God's self-reflexive essential act in which God himself knows his own simple essence. Eckhart thus gives a justification of the unity of the divine nature or of the divine essence in terms of the metaphysics of spirit or the theory of the intellect, thereby precisely reversing the relationship of justification between the definition of the first principle in the metaphysics of unity and its definition in the metaphysics of spirit that had been traditional in Platonism and Neoplatonism and in Christian thinkers prior to Eckhart. In this tradition, the One that transcends spirit is the ground that brings forth, and at the same time the basic goal of the absolute spirit's act of knowing. In Eckhart, however, the absolute spirit

grounds (so to speak) the unity of the divine essence through the act of its self-knowledge, and the absolute spirit is this unity. I believe that this reversal in the theoretical justification is the truly revolutionary element in Eckhart's metaphysics of unity. As far as I know, it is not to be found anywhere in the Western history of the metaphysics of unity before him.

There is at least one source of inspiration for Eckhart's justification of the unity of God in terms of the theory of the intellect, namely (as is also the case with regard to negative theology) in the Jewish philosopher of religion Moses Maimonides, since Eckhart receives and transforms not only Maimonides' strict concept of the absolute unity of God, but also the foundations of this concept in Maimonides' theory of the intellect. However, this affirmation relies on a much more restricted textual basis than Eckhart's reception of the metaphysics of unity and the negative theology of Moses Maimonides,⁶⁰ since he does not refer explicitly to Maimonides as his source when he justifies the simplicity of God in terms of the theory of the intellect. Nevertheless, there is a certain amount of indirect evidence for this affirmation, as some remarks by Kurt Flasch suggest.⁶¹ In a passage in Chapter 20 of his *Expositio libri Exodi*, Eckhart quotes Maimonides' statement that the highest group of human beings makes its goal that which ought to be the goal of the human person, namely to know what is intellectual and to choose that which is nobler, that is, the knowledge of the divine Creator, of the angels, and of the other works of the Creator. Such persons see God's face and are even like the angels. Accordingly (and here Eckhart quotes Maimonides), the true human being must limit himself to the satisfaction of those bodily needs that are necessary for life, in order to lead as intellectual a life as possible.⁶² This is because (as Eckhart states in another passage) the intellect is proper to the essence of the human person. According to Maimonides, the intellect is precisely

⁶⁰ On this, see Markus Enders, "Deus est unus omnibus modis. Zur Metaphysik der Einheit bei Meister Eckhart und bei Moses Maimonides als ihrer bedeutendsten Quelle," in *Einheit und Vielheit als metaphysisches Problem*, ed. J. Brachtendorf (forthcoming).

⁶¹ See Kurt Flasch, *Meister Eckhart. Die Geburt der "Deutschen Mystik" aus dem Geist der arabischen Philosophie*, 2nd ed. (Munich: 2008), 144 (speaking of Maimonides): "But he [sc. God] is spirit. Strictly speaking, this could lead to a contradiction of the pure unity. Maimonides took this already traditional contamination, which Plotinus had avoided, from the tradition and drew the consequence that it is not external ceremonies that lead us to God, but rather the intellect. In its striving towards unity, it links us to the divine One. It is the intellect of the Aristotelian-Arabic theory of the intellect that brings God and the human person closer to each other, in a strict (Jewish-Neo-Platonic) consciousness of transcendence."

⁶² See Meister Eckhart, *Expos. l. Ex.*, n. 200, LW II, 168, 16–169, 13.

the human capacity that unites the human person to God, in that he grasps God with the light of the intellect.⁶³ The intellect unites the human person to God because Maimonides sees in the intellect the perfectly simple essence of the Creator God, since the triad of the ability to know, the act of knowing, and that which is known are perfectly one in God. In Chapter 68 of the First Book of his *chef d'œuvre* in the philosophy of religion, the *Guide of the Perplexed*, Maimonides demonstrates in great detail, with his starting point in Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 12.7, the identity or perfect unity of the subject of knowledge, the object of knowledge, and the act of knowledge by God as the essentially active intellect. For Maimonides, the perfect unity of God and his being intellect are substantially identical; or more precisely, God is one or single and simple in essence because he is absolute intellect—absolute, because he is essentially active intellect.⁶⁴

Let us briefly sum up the results of our exposition of Sermon XXIX up to this point. According to Eckhart, the simplicity that is proper to God is the essence or the nature of the absolute intellect, so that God is realized only in the intellect. In the act of its self-knowledge, the divine intellect

⁶³ See *ibid.*, n. 277, LW II, 223, 7–11, with a quotation from Moses Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, Book 3, Chapter 52: “This king that protects us and is united to us is the reason that emanates towards us and is the link between us and God. And just as we know God through the light that he allows to stream towards us, in accordance with the words: ‘In your light we see light’ (Ps 36:10), so too he continuously sees through us by means of this light” (Maimonides, *Dux seu director dubitantium aut perplexorum* (Paris: 1520; repr. Frankfurt am Main: 1964), lib. 3, cap. 52, fol. 112r: “Quoniam rex iste qui est obligatus et coniunctus cum eo, iste est intellectus qui effusus est super nos: qui coniungit nos cum creatore, secundum quod nos apprehendimus ipsum cum lumine intellectus quem effundit super nos, sicut David dixit. In lumine tuo videbimus lumen. Et similiter ipse cum hoc eodem lumine respicit super nos: et per ipsum est semper nobiscum videns et considerans”). On this, see Kurt Flasch, *Meister Eckhart* (note 61 above), 144.

⁶⁴ On this, see also Flasch, *Meister Eckhart* (note 60 above), 144: “One who has not read the philosophical books about the intellect can never understand God correctly. Maimonides speaks in the plural of ‘books’ about the theory of the intellect, and we should take this as a reference to Aristotle’s *De anima* and to al-Farabi, as well as to Avicenna. Maimonides drew on a broad current of speculation on the intellect, in the hope that this stream alone would allow him to acquire some knowledge of the unknown God, despite all that he says about the unknowability of God.” Flasch refers here to Maimonides, *Dux* (note 62 above), lib. 1, chap. 67, fol. 27r: “Iam scis verbum manifestum quod philosophi dixerunt de Creatore, quod ipse est intellectus, intelligens et intellectum, et quod ista tria sunt unum in Creatore.... Non est dubium quod quicumque non considerat in libris de intellectu compositis nec apprehendit quiditatem intellectus vel substantiam eius” [“For you know how widely known is the affirmation that the philosophers have made about God, namely that he is at one and the same time the ability to think, the one who thinks, and that which is thought, and that these three in God are only one.... It cannot be doubted that one who has not read the books about the intellect and has not grasped the essence of the intellect or its substance... will find it very hard to grasp this idea”].

grounds the absolute unity of its essence. This means that Eckhart is the first thinker in the history of Western metaphysics to propose a justification of absolute unity in terms of the metaphysics of spirit, and thus a metaphysics of absolute subjectivity.

5.3 *The Distinction Between the "Godhead" and "God" and the Mystagogical Consequence of Grounding the Unity of God in the Theory of the Intellect*

This substantial identification of the unity with the intellect of God does not contradict the well-known distinction that Eckhart frequently draws between the "Godhead" as the simple essence of God and "God" as the Trinitarian life of the Godhead.⁶⁵ For the Godhead is the essential unity of the divine intellect, and "God" (distinct from this unity not in essence, but only relationally and personally) designates the Trinitarian mode of self-knowledge and of Being of this absolute intellect. According to Eckhart, therefore, there must be two modes of knowledge of the divine intellect: his perfectly simple knowledge of his own essence, without relationships and differentiations, and a relationally differentiated self-knowledge, in which his Trinitarian mode of Being consists. In the divine intellect, however, these two modes of knowledge are always realized simultaneously in one and the same act.

In *Sermo XXIX*, Eckhart draws the following mystagogical consequence from his grounding of the unity of God in the theory of the intellect: to the extent that something possesses intellect or the capacity for knowledge, it participates in God or in the One, and to that extent it is one with God. The ascent to the spirit or the subordination under the spirit thus means being united with God through God. At the end of this sermon, Eckhart undertakes yet another justification of the total character of the unity of God in terms of the theory of the intellect: in the divine intellect are "doubtless all beings in all, since there they are intellect and nothing else."⁶⁶ All-embracing unity or omni-unity is the unity of God thanks to its character as intellect, since in the absolute intellect all its specific contents are linked to one another without separation and without commixture, and thus interpenetrate one another.

⁶⁵ On this distinction, see the detailed study by Gunther Stephenson, *Gottheit und Gott in der spekulativen Mystik Meister Eckharts. Eine Untersuchung zur Phänomenologie und Typologie der Mystik. Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde vorgelegt der Philosophischen Fakultät der Universität Bonn* (Bonn: 1954).

⁶⁶ Meister Eckhart, *Sermo XXIX*, n. 305, LW IV, 270, 14–15: "ubi procul dubio in quantum huiusmodi nec aliter sunt omnia in omnibus."

6. THE UNITY OF GOD, UNDIFFERENTIATEDNESS, REFLEXIVE
SELF-AFFIRMATION, AND ITS FUNCTION AS A PRINCIPLE FOR THE
NUMERICALLY DETERMINED MULTIPLICITY IN ECKHART'S
EXPOSITIO LIBRI SAPIENTIAE

6.1 *The Unlimitedness, Undifferentiatedness, Unity, Fullness,
and Unicity of God*

In the course of his commentary on the book of Wisdom, Eckhart expounds the scriptural passage "Deus est unus" ("God is one," following Gal. 3:20) with an emphasis on the metaphysics of knowledge. Here, he begins by deducing God's unity and unicity from his unlimitedness: that outside of which there is nothing, is unlimited. The consequence is that there cannot be two unlimited beings. God is unlimited, because nothing sets any limit to him; accordingly, he is one and unique.⁶⁷

Secondly, Eckhart derives God's unicity from his undifferentiatedness, and points out that undifferentiatedness and unity are one and the same, as he has already stated in his *Commentary on the Book of Wisdom*. It is impossible for two or more undifferentiated things to exist, since these would have to be distinct from each other, and consequently no longer undifferentiated. Accordingly, the lack of differentiation implies both unicity and unity.⁶⁸

Thirdly, the unicity of God is also a consequence of his identity with Being itself—the identity taught by Ex. 3:14. This proposition too is proved by a *reductio ad absurdum* of the contradictory antithetical supposition: for if God were not Being itself, then there would be two gods. These could not be Being itself, but each of them could only be an existent. In that case, however, every existent brought forth by these gods would be two existents, and that is impossible. God's unicity therefore follows from the identification of God with Being.⁶⁹ Eckhart also affirms that although the concept of the One may indeed sound negative—the One as the "not many"—it is in substance affirmative. As the negation of the negation,

⁶⁷ See Meister Eckhart, *Expositio libri Sapientiae*, n. 146, LW II, 484, 2–5: "impossibile est duo esse infinita. Hoc est per se notum intelligenti terminos. Infinitum enim est extra quod nihil est. Deus autem, utpote nullo genere finitus et limitatus aut finibus comprehensus, infinitus est, ut iam supra dictum est. Igitur ipse est unus et unicus."

⁶⁸ See *ibid.*, n. 146, LW II, 484, 6–8: "impossibile est duo esse infinita, duo vel plura indistincta. Indistinctum enim est unum idem, ut etiam supra dictum est; sed deus indistinctus est et indistinctum. Igitur impossibile est esse plures deos."

⁶⁹ See *ibid.*, n. 146, LW II, 484, 9–485, 2.

it is in fact the purest affirmation, and the fullness of the concept that is affirmed.⁷⁰ According to Aristotle, it is to the One alone that plenitude and superabundance belong.⁷¹ Eckhart's great concern, therefore, is that the unity of God should not be misunderstood as an abstract, negative intellectual concept in the sense of that which is merely not many; rather, it should be understood as the unlimited, all-embracing plenitude of the intellectual essential act of God, which possesses the supremely affirmative character of a pure self-affirmation. Hence, the unity of God is to be understood as his self-reflection, which recognizes as his own the plenitude of all the perfections of Being that are united to one another, and therein at the same time perfectly affirms his own self. This divine One, which is unlimited and continuously knows itself and infinitely affirms itself, generates from itself all that is multiple, and hence every number. Thanks to its own unity, it bestows on all that is multiple its numerically determined form of Being, which represents a degree or a manner of united multiplicity.⁷² Furthermore, the One has both substantial and conceptual priority over duality and multiplicity, as Eckhart emphasizes in agreement with Thomas and the entire tradition of the Western metaphysics of unity.

6.2 *The Precedence of the Unity Over the Truth and the Goodness of God*

Eckhart likewise resolutely maintains the precedence of unity, as a definition of God, before truth and goodness. He justifies this as follows.⁷³

Unlike the true and the good, the One does not add anything positive to Being, either substantially or conceptually; all it adds is a negation, since "the One" designates Being itself, as it is in itself, by excluding and negating the "zero." The One negates the "zero" by negating every negation of Being that designates a particular lack of Being. This is why the One designates a negation of the negation of Being. In this way, it

⁷⁰ Ibid., n. 147, LW II, 485, 5–7: "Sciendum igitur ad praesens quod li unum primo est voce quidem negativum, sed re ipsa affirmativum. Item est negatio negationis, quae est purissima affirmatio et plenitudo termini affirmati."

⁷¹ Cf. ibid., n. 147, LW II, 485, 8–9: "Plenitudo autem et superabundantia et 'quod per superabundantiam dicitur uni soli convenit,' ut ait philosophus."

⁷² See ibid., n. 148, LW II, 485, 9–11: "Adhuc autem unum se toto descendit in omnia, quae citra sunt, quae multa sunt, quae numerata sunt. In quibus singulis ipsum unum non dividitur, sed manens unum incorruptum profundit omnem numerum et sua unitate informat."

⁷³ See ibid., n. 149, LW II, 486, 12–13: "unitas sive unum propriissime deo convenit, magis etiam quam li verum et li bonum."

negates the “zero,” or, to put it positively, it expresses the purity, the core, or the summit of Being itself—something that is not yet expressed in the term “Being” as such. The One has thus a very immediate relationship to Being. It indicates that the Being thus designated embraces everything that belongs to it and excludes everything that belongs to its opposite, namely the “zero.”⁷⁴ Here too, Eckhart’s metaphysics of the transcendentals is in the background, but, for the reason we have stated, he gives unity a position of precedence among the transcendentals, since it designates nothing other than the pure substance that is the purity and perfection of Being itself.

Since the One designates the perfect purity of Being itself and does not add anything positive to this, it is—even more than the true and the good—the definition of his essence that is the most proper to God.⁷⁵ And this is why the scriptural text “God is one” (Gal. 3:20) attributes this unity to God. Eckhart takes over from Macrobius’ *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* the proposition that this unity of God, which is itself not enumerable, is the source and origin of all numbers and of innumerable genera and species, and thus the beginning and the boundary of all, without itself possessing a beginning or a boundary. As we have seen, Eckhart holds that this unity of God’s essence also entails the unicity of God, or of his wisdom—the wisdom that He Himself is.⁷⁶

6.3 *The Undifferentiatedness of the Unity as the Basis of its Difference From all that is Multiple*

Eckhart loves the paradoxical, contradictory definition of God, since this shows that God is exalted above the thinking of human reason. It also shows the limitation on the validity of the principle that contradictions must be avoided, since God is above all contradictions. This is why he affirms the validity of the apparently contradictory proposition that

⁷⁴ See *ibid.*, n. 148, LW II, 485f.; on the relationship between Being and unity in God, see Goris, *Einheit als Prinzip und Ziel* (note 26 above), 71: “The negative element in thinking of the One as *indivisio* is posited absolutely and is linked exclusively to God, since it designates the total inclusiveness of Being. A productive relationship is thus established between the attribution of the ‘existent’ and the attribution of the ‘One’ to God. The fact that God is one means that he includes all Being in himself. The fact that God exists means that he is one.”

⁷⁵ See Meister Eckhart, *Expositio libri Sapientiae*, n. 149, LW II, 486, 12–13: “unitas sive unum propriissime deo convenit, magis etiam quam li verum et li bonum.”

⁷⁶ See *ibid.*, n. 149, LW II, 486f.; on unity as the principle of number, see Goris, *Einheit als Prinzip und Ziel* (note 26 above), 114–23 and 133–55.

nothing is so different as God from number and that which is counted or can be counted (i.e. from that which is multiple or created)—and at the same time, that nothing is so un-different as God from all this.⁷⁷ In what follows, Eckhart demonstrates separately the two parts of this contradictory affirmation. He employs the following arguments to show that nothing is so different as God from all created things in their multiplicity.

First, the undifferentiated is more different from the differentiated than any one differentiated thing is from another differentiated thing. Undifferentiatedness belongs to the nature of God, while differentiatedness belongs to the nature and to the concept of that which is created. This is why God is supremely different from that which is created.⁷⁸

Secondly, the antithesis of something is that which is furthest removed from it. God and the creature are antithetical, for the One and the innumerable are the antithesis of number and the numerable. Consequently, nothing is so different from every created thing as God.

Thirdly, whatever is different, thanks to its undifferentiatedness, from everything that bears a differentiation in itself is all the more different, the more it is undifferentiated. Eckhart argues that this proposition can be reversed: the more something is differentiated, the more is it undifferentiated, since its differentiatedness differentiates it from that which is undifferentiated or non-differentiated. Accordingly, the more it is differentiated, the more is it undifferentiated. How far is this paradoxical description valid? Something that is in itself multiple, and therefore different from something else, becomes more undifferentiated from God precisely through an increase in its differentiatedness (i.e. in its definition), because it becomes ever more identical to the infinite simplicity of God, or ever more one. This means that the paradoxical relationship

⁷⁷ See *Expositio libri Sapientiae*, n. 154, LW II, 489, 7–8: “Iuxta quod notandum quod nihil tam distinctum a numero et numerato sive numerabili, creato scilicet, ut deus, et nihil tam indistinctum.” On the context of this sentence, see Werner Beierwaltes, “Unterschied durch Un-unterschiedenheit,” in *Identität und Differenz*, ed. Werner Beierwaltes, Philosophische Abhandlungen 49 (Frankfurt am Main: 1980), 97–104, see 98: “The sentence quoted from the commentary on Wisdom is the goal of the exposition of the verse: et cum sit una, omnia potest, ‘and since she (Wisdom) is the One, she can do everything.’ This makes it clear that the discussion of the reference of ‘indistinctio’ and ‘distinctio’ takes place against the background of the question of *unity* and *multiplicity*.” On this, see also Beierwaltes, “‘Und daz Ein machet uns saelic’” (note 50 above), 111f.

⁷⁸ See Meister Eckhart, *Expositio libri Sapientiae*, n. 154, LW II, 489, 9–13: “Ratio prima: quia plus distinguitur indistinctum a distincto quam quaelibet duo distincta ab invicem. . . . Sed de natura dei est indistinctio, de natura et ratione creati distinctio, ut dictum est supra. Igitur deus est distinctissimus ab omni et quolibet creato.”

is valid: the more it is differentiated, the more is it undifferentiated. It is one with the undifferentiated. But the reverse paradoxical relationship is also valid: the more something is undifferentiated or simple, the more is it different from that which is different from itself. Eckhart now states, with a reference to Thomas Aquinas (cf. *S.Th.* I, *quaest.* 7, art. 1), that God is something undifferentiated which differs from everything else by reason of his undifferentiatedness, since (according to John Damascene) he is a sea of unlimited and accordingly undifferentiated substance. This is why God is supremely different from his creatures.⁷⁹

Eckhart adduces the following three reasons in support of the apparently contradictory second part of the affirmation, namely that nothing is so one and undifferentiated as God and the creature.

First, nothing is so undifferentiated as Being and the existent, as an act and its potency, and as form and matter. And this is precisely how God relates to all that is created.

Secondly, nothing is so undifferentiated as the composite and its components. Since, however, number or multiplicity, that is, that which is counted and that which can be counted, are composed of unities, nothing is so reciprocally undifferentiated as God the One, or the unity of God, and the created things which are numerically determined.

Thirdly, nothing is more undifferentiated from another thing than from that from which it does not differentiate itself by its differentiatedness. As the third argument for the first part of the affirmation has shown, all created things that are determined by number do not differentiate themselves from God by means of their differentiatedness. Consequently, nothing is so undifferentiated and so "one" as God and the creature—for undifferen-

⁷⁹ See *ibid.*, n. 154, LW II, 490, 4–10. On the meaning of this first part of the contradictory affirmation—that nothing is so different as God from all that is multiple and created—see also Werner Beierwaltes, "Unterschied durch Un-unterschiedenheit" (note 76 above), 99: "It is thus through this undifferentiatedness per se that the pure unity or identity differs . . . from that which is differentiated in itself and from other things . . . The created existent is thus determined, limited, and in its essence mutually exclusive (despite a specific relatedness). Each one is, by itself, something different and at the same time something separated by number, this thing identical with its own self (*hoc et hoc*)."⁷⁹ Beierwaltes expounds Eckhart's thesis, that a higher degree of differentiatedness in an existent leads to a higher degree of its undifferentiatedness from God, with regard to the foundational relationship between the Creator and that which is created; see *ibid.*, 103: "A higher degree of differentiatedness in an existent points all the more strongly to something that is not differentiated from it, as its ground; the One is the foundational ground, and the closer the existent comes to undifferentiatedness as a quality of Being, the greater is its difference from all that is different."

tiatedness and unity are the same. This is why God and every creature are undifferentiated entities. And this proves the unity of the divine intellect or of the wisdom of God.⁸⁰

6.4 *The Omnipotence of the Divine Intellect as the Implication of its Unity*

In the second line of argumentation with regard to the one, simple Spirit of God, Eckhart gives reasons why omnipotence is implied by the unity of the divine intellect.

Here, he takes up the Neoplatonic principle that the more something is simple and united in itself, the greater is its generative, creative, and sustaining ability—its effects *ad extra* in the sphere of real multiplicity. However, he attempts to offer his own demonstration of this principle. That which is composite receives its power from something else, namely, from its components. Unlike this, however, that which is not composite or simple possesses its own power and its ability. And this is why its effects are greater.⁸¹ This means that the greater the number of the simple, non-composite components of a thing is, the greater will be the power that it has as a totality, and likewise its effects *ad extra*. Accordingly, the simpler something is, the more powerful and the stronger it is.⁸²

If, however, something is more effective the more united it is, then that which is absolutely simple—and it alone—must be able to do all things. It must be omnipotent. For an increase in power in the cause leads to an increase in power in the effect. The wisdom or Spirit of God is in itself perfectly simple; it follows that it is also omnipotent.⁸³

The second proof that the omnipotence of the Spirit of God is implied by his unity is based on a proposition from the *Liber de causis*, that every united power is less restricted, and is capable of having a greater effect on a greater number of things. God's wisdom is the simplest of all, since

⁸⁰ On these three reasons in support of the second part of the affirmation, see Meister Eckhart, *Expositio libri Sapientiae*, n. 155, LW II, 491; on this, see also Beierwaltes, "Unterschied durch Un-unterschiedenheit" (note 76 above), 98f.

⁸¹ See Meister Eckhart, *Expositio libri Sapientiae*, n. 156, LW II, 492, 2–3: "Sciendum ergo quod quanto quid est simplicius et unitius, tanto est potentius et virtuosius, plura potens." This principle is the subject of *Propositio 17* of the *Liber de causis* (§16, 83f., ed. Adriaan Pattin).

⁸² See *ibid.*, n. 156, LW II, 492, 4–7.

⁸³ See *ibid.*, n. 157, LW II, 493, 1–5.

it is the first cause of everything. Accordingly, it is absolutely unrestricted and omnipotent.⁸⁴

Finally, let us also mention Eckhart's third argument. Each thing has an effect because it is real and one. It follows that the more something is "one" or simple, the more is it real. The divine wisdom is absolutely and supremely simple. It therefore possesses the greatest power and effect. Thanks to its simplicity, it possesses absolute effect. Thanks to its primordial unity as the first cause, it possesses an omnipotent effect that is proper to the divine wisdom alone.⁸⁵

Let us sum up. In his commentary on the Old Testament book of Wisdom, Eckhart infers from the scriptural passage "Deus est unus" (according to Gal. 3:20) and from the book of Wisdom that wisdom is one. He infers the infinite unity and the undifferentiatedness of God from all that is created, his reflexive self-affirmation, his superiority to all multiplicity and every number, his function as creative and constitutive principle of all multiplicity and every number, his identity with the purity of Being, and his omnipotence, that is, his unrestricted power to bring forth everything that is possible.

7. A NOTE ON SERMO XXXVII, "UNUS DEUS ET PATER OMNIUM,"
ON EPH. 4:1–6

Reasons of space do not permit me to analyze all the details of this Latin sermon,⁸⁶ which is important for Eckhart's definition of the concept of God in terms of the metaphysics of unity. Let me at least summarize the findings of a study presented elsewhere.⁸⁷ According to this sermon, God's unity is the reason why he can be known only negatively. His unity is the reason for his undifferentiatedness and his character of totality or his omni-unity, which gives perfect joy to all intellectual beings.⁸⁸ Besides this, God's unity is the reason why he is the principle of all that is different from him and of all that is multiple. It is only the one God who brings

⁸⁴ See *ibid.*, n. 157, LW II, 493, 6–8.

⁸⁵ See *ibid.*, n. 157, LW II, 493, 9–494, 5.

⁸⁶ See Meister Eckhart, *Sermo XXXVII* [Dominica septima decima post trinitatem de epistula (Eph. 4:1–6)], LW IV, 320–24.

⁸⁷ See Markus Enders, "*Deus est unus omnibus modis*" (note 59 above), Chapter Five.

⁸⁸ See Meister Eckhart, *Sermo XXXVII*, n. 375, LW IV, 320, 5–321, 2.

forth the existence of the multiple and determines what it shall be, that is to say, its particular degree of unity.⁸⁹

8. MEISTER ECKHART'S UNDERSTANDING OF GOD—A SUMMARY OF OUR FINDINGS

Let us now bring together the findings of our investigation of Meister Eckhart's understanding of God.⁹⁰ By far the most important traditional source for Eckhart's theory of the absolute unity of the first principle is the metaphysics of unity and the radical negative theology of the Jewish philosopher of religion, Moses Maimonides. Eckhart takes over Maimonides' strict concept of the absolute unity of the divine essence, which excludes every form of multiplicity, whether real or merely conceptual. Secondly, Eckhart follows Maimonides in the rejection of an affirmative theology, to the extent that this predicates accidental properties of God. He does not, however, follow Maimonides in his view that all the divine predicates developed by the affirmative theology possess an accidental character. Rather, Eckhart presupposes that perfections of Being that are employed as divine predicates, such as omnipotence, omniscience, and perfect goodness, designate the perfection of the absolutely simple essence of God himself and thus correspond to something real, even if this "something real" does not have mutually distinct properties. Thirdly, Eckhart basically follows Maimonides in his negative theology, as the most appropriate epistemological path with regard to the simple and unrestricted essence of God. But he does not follow him in his strict exclusion of every relationality from the essence of God. Rather, Eckhart transforms Maimonides' metaphysics of unity by giving a specific justification of the applicability of the category of "relationship" to God in order to safeguard God's Trinitarian mode of Being. In his commentary on the book of Exodus, Eckhart links this transformation of Maimonides' metaphysics of unity to his exposition of the revealed divine name "Ego sum qui sum" in the sense of a reflexive self-affirmation by God that possesses the formal character of the abolition of all restrictions, or of a "negation of the negation." In his *Commentary on the Book of Wisdom*, which was probably written at an earlier period than

⁸⁹ See *ibid.*, n. 377, LW IV, 322, 11–323, 8.

⁹⁰ This summary also takes into account the findings in my essay "*Deus est unus omnibus modis*" (note 59 above) on the metaphysics of unity in Meister Eckhart, which complements the present essay.

his *Commentary on Exodus*, Eckhart develops a concept of absolute unity by demonstrating the unicity, the omni-unity, that is, the all-embracing total character of this unity, the unlimitedness, the omnipotent function as principle of the numerically determined multiplicity, and above all, the utter lack of differentiation as implicit designations of the absolute One, or more precisely of the unity of the divine intellect. As we have seen in his Latin *Sermo XXIX*, Eckhart is the first in the history of Western metaphysics (though most probably following Moses Maimonides) to justify the unity of God in terms of the theory of the intellect or of the metaphysics of the spirit, thereby exactly reversing the causal relationship—which belonged to the Platonic—Neoplatonic tradition and had been received by Christian thinkers before Eckhart—between the designations of the first principle in terms of the metaphysics of unity and of the spirit. According to Eckhart, the absolute Spirit realizes the unity of his divine being through the act of his self-knowledge. It is only because Eckhart sees unity as a proper designation of the divine intellect that he can also understand and conceive of this unity as a Trinitarian unity in his *Commentary on the Book of Exodus*.

This finding accords very well with Eckhart's early exposition of the Being of God in terms of the theory of the intellect, in his first Parisian *Quaestio*. Here, the absolute act of knowing is identified as the ground of God's Being; according to the Latin *Sermo XXIX*, the unity of the divine nature is a property belonging only to the divine intellect. This makes Eckhart the first proponent of a metaphysics of absolute subjectivity *avant la lettre*. The teaching in the first Parisian *Quaestio* about the transcendence of the Being of the divine intellect does not in the least contradict Eckhart's metaphysics of the transcendentals in his *Opus tripartitum*, which identifies God with perfect Being itself, since the "Being" that is not applied to God in the first Parisian *Quaestio* is the grounded, determined, finite Being of the creatures, which is fundamentally different from the perfect, simple Being of the divine intellect.

The Latin *Sermo XXXVII* makes it particularly clear that Eckhart understands the unity of the divine Spirit as the ground that brings forth the existence and the degree of unity of all the determinate forms of united multiplicity, and is therefore the ground of all that exists. Eckhart understands this absolute unity of the divine intellect as the nature or the essence of God. At the same time, however, it is the irresistible basic goal of all the striving of the human soul, which was created by this unity and in view of this unity. This is why the human soul is capable of receiving

the unity of the divine Spirit.⁹¹ And this, as Eckhart programmatically asserts in his *Book of the Divine Consolation*,⁹² is why “only the One makes us happy.”⁹³

⁹¹ This interpretation can be verified with particular clarity in Eckhart's German Sermon 21 (“Unus deus et pater omnium”). Whereas the transcendentals of goodness and truth, which are interpreted by Eckhart's metaphysics of the transcendentals as perfections of the divine Being, contain conceptual additions to the unity of the divine essence, since the goodness of God signifies his admirable perfection and the truth of God signifies his self-reflexive omniscience, unity adds nothing conceptually to God and is therefore the exact expression of his Being. In the unity, God's divinity is realized; that is to say, the divinity of God, the nature proper to God or the essence of God, is the (absolute) unity. See Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 21*, DW I, 361, 9–12, 368, 5–369, 5; on the receptivity of the created intellectual soul for the unity of God, see *ibid.*, DW I, 369, 6–370, 6.

⁹² Meister Eckhart, *Das Buch der göttlichen Tröstung*, DW V, 41, 21.

⁹³ [English translation: Brian McNeil.]

MEISTER ECKHART AND MOSES MAIMONIDES:
FROM JUDAEO-ARABIC RATIONALISM TO CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM

Yossef Schwartz

Since his rediscovery in modern literature, Meister Eckhart has often been celebrated as one of the greatest mystics in European intellectual history. At the same time, it is clear for us today that Eckhart's thought represents a rather unique kind of "mysticism," one that is deeply rooted in the scholastic rationalistic tradition, somewhere between the German Dominican school established by Albert the Great ("Albertschule")¹ and the Parisian scholastic theological tradition.² Both traditions are heavily connected with the Christian Latin reception of Arab rationalism that took place between the mid-12th and mid-13th centuries. Hence Eckhart's mysticism stands at the end of a complex transition process from Arabic *falsafa* to Christian scholasticism.³ Eckhart's point of departure, both from his European predecessors and his Arab sources, seems to be closely related to his "modern," extreme, and often provocative, idealistic formulations.⁴ And it is also connected with a political dimension, where Eckhart the preacher consistently popularizes complicated metaphysical and theological discourse in order to form his "vernacular theology."⁵ In the following I would like to claim that the major place in which Eckhart expresses simultaneously both his indebtedness to and his liberation from his sources, especially in the last phase of his life, is strongly connected

¹ See Kurt Flasch, "Von Dietrich zu Albert," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Theologie und Philosophie* 32 (1985), 7–26; Alain de Libera, *Introduction à la mystique rhénane* (Paris: 1984); and de Libera, *Maître Eckhart et la mystique Rhénane* (Paris: 1999). The most systematic historical description of this German tradition is offered by Loris Sturlese, *Die deutsche Philosophie im Mittelalter; Von Bonifatius bis zu Albert dem Großen* (Munich: 1989).

² Kurt Flasch, "Meister Eckhart—Versuch, ihn aus dem Mystischen Strom zu retten," in *Gnosis und Mystik in der Geschichte der Philosophie*, ed. Peter Koslowski (Zürich: 1988), 94–110; Flasch, "Zum Ursprung der neuzeitlichen Philosophie im späten Mittelalter," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 85 (1978), 1–18.

³ As again formulated by Flasch in his recent book, *Meister Eckhart, Philosoph des Christentums* (Munich: 2009). See also Kurt Flasch, *Meister Eckhart. Die Geburt der "Deutschen Mystik" aus dem Geist der arabischen Philosophie* (Munich: 2006).

⁴ See Ernst von Bracken, *Meister Eckhart und Fichte* (Würzburg: 1943); Flasch, "Zum Ursprung," 130; Andreas Quero-Sánchez, *Sein als Freiheit. Die idealistische Metaphysik Meister Eckharts und Johann Gottlieb Fichtes* (Freiburg im Breisgau: 2004).

⁵ Bernard McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart* (New York: 2001), 132.

with one particular source of inspiration—the Arab Jewish writings of “Rabbi Moyses,” alias Maimonides (Arabic: Mūsā ibn Maymūn al-Qurtubī; Hebrew: Moshe ben Maimon; Acronym: RaMBaM, 1138–1204). Eckhart’s encounter with Maimonides, as we shall immediately see, is most fascinating precisely because it does not present some simple case of “influence” or some creative but indifferent usage of information ready at hand. Instead, it confronts us with a most rich and complex intellectual encounter, one that bears some surprisingly fruitful results.⁶

In the framework of this short chapter no full account of that rich intellectual phenomenon can be given. Instead I will try to highlight some essential elements in Eckhart’s reception of Maimonidean ideas and to analyze the basic structure of his methods of reading and interpreting Maimonides’s text.⁷

Maimonides’s *Guide of the Perplexed* (arab. *Dalālat al-Ḥā’irīn*, hebr. *Moreh ha-Nevukhim*, lat. *Dux neutrorum seu perplexorum*), written in Arabic in Cairo during the last decade of the 12th century, made its way into

⁶ The reception of Maimonides’s *Guide* in Meister Eckhart’s writings became a well-known fact of Eckhart’s research with the discovery of Eckhart’s Latin writings and its ongoing editing work since the beginning of the 20th century. Joseph Koch “Meister Eckhart und die jüdische Religionsphilosophie des Mittelalters,” *Kleine Schriften* 1 (Rome, 1973; first published 1923), 349–65, was the first to point out the major role of Maimonides in Eckhart’s Latin work. Koch was later followed by two of his students: Ernst Refke shortly before the war “Studien zum Problem der Entwicklung Meister Eckharts im Opus tripartitum,” *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 57 (1938), 19–95, and Wolfgang Kluxen after the war “Litteraturgeschichtliches zum lateinischen Moses Maimonides,” *RthAM* 21 (1954), 2–49; “Maimonides und die Hochscholastik,” *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 63 (1955), 151–69. Peter Heidrich’s dissertation *Maimunizitate bei Meister Eckhart*, completed in 1959, was part of this same effort. For more recent studies see Ruedi Imbach, “Ut ait Rabbi Moyses. Maimonidische Philosopheme bei Thomas von Aquin und Meister Eckhart,” *Collectanea Franciscana* 60 (1990), 99–115. In the English-speaking world it was especially Bernard McGinn who pointed out the significance of this encounter. See McGinn, “Meister Eckhart on Speaking about God,” in *Meister Eckhart, Teacher and Preacher*, ed. B. McGinn, F. Tobin, and E. Borgstadt (Mahwah, N.J.: 1986), 15–30.

⁷ For a more comprehensive account see Yossef Schwartz, “*To Thee is silence praise: Meister Eckhart’s reading in Maimonides’ Guide of the Perplexed* (Tel Aviv: 2002) [in Hebrew]; Schwartz, “‘Ecce est locus apud me,’ Eckharts’ and Maimonides’ Raumvorstellung als Begriff des Göttlichen,” in *Raum und Raumvorstellung im Mittelalter*, ed. Jan A. Aertsen and Andreas Speer, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 253 (Berlin: 1998.), 348–64; Schwartz, “Meister Eckharts Schriftauslegung als maimonidisches Projekt,” in *Moses Maimonides (1138–1204)—His Religious, Scientific, and Philosophical Wirkungsgeschichte in Different Cultural Contexts*, ed. Görg K. Hasselhoff and Ottfried Fraisse, *Ex Oriente Lux: Rezeptionen und Exegesen als Traditionskritik* 4 (Würzburg: 2004), 173–208; Schwartz, “Zwischen Einheitsmetaphysik und Einheitshermeneutik: Eckharts Maimonides-Lektüre und das Datierungsproblem des ‘Opus tripartitum,’” in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt*, ed. A. Speer and L. Wegener, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 32 (Berlin: 2005), 259–79; see also Görg K. Hasselhoff, *Moses Maimonides interkulturell gelesen* (Nordhausen: 2009), 58–72.

Western Europe from the beginning of the 13th century onwards. It was first translated (twice) into Hebrew and had widespread use among the Jewish intellectuals in Provence, in Italy, and in northern Spain.⁸ During the 1230s, at the latest, it became widely known to Christian theologians as well, and at the beginning of the 1240s it was fully translated into Latin, most probably in Paris.⁹ If one examines the reception of the *Guide* in the Latin West before Eckhart, the picture that emerges is of an influence that can be circumscribed mostly to a concrete period, specific intellectual figures, and defined topics. This period runs approximately from the 1240s to the 1280s. The philosophers who significantly employ notions taken from the *Guide* are generally masters of theology, most of them Dominicans. Within their writings the quotations from the *Guide* can be further limited almost solely to their theological works. Their interest lies in theological-philosophical issues, such as the question of the eternity of the world, proofs of God's existence, and the problems of prophecy, providence, immortality of the soul, and the rationality that underlies the divine commandments of the Mosaic law.¹⁰ However, during the first decade of the 14th century there was much evidence for the development of a variety of new attitudes towards Jewish sources, especially in the Faculty of Theology in Paris. This new general attitude brought about a new interest in Maimonides as well.¹¹

It is on the ground of this general state of affairs that the reader stands amazed at Eckhart's Latin corpus and the massively uncommon usage of Maimonides within it. A detailed textual comparison would easily assess

⁸ On the transmission of Maimonides's *Guide to European Hebrew*, see Carlos Fraenkel, *From Maimonides to Samuel ibn Tibbon: The Transformation of the Dalālat al-Hā'irīn into the Moreh ha-Nevukhim* (Jerusalem: 2007) [in Hebrew]; Gad Freudenthal, "Science in the Medieval Jewish Culture of Southern France," in Freudenthal, *Science in Medieval Hebrew and Arabic Traditions* (Aldershot: 2005), 23–58.

⁹ For the most general examination of the reception of Maimonides in the Christian Latin Middle Ages, see Görg K. Hasselhoff, *Dicit Rabbi Moyses. Studien zum Bild von Moses Maimonides im lateinischen Westen vom 13. bis zum 15. Jahrhundert* (Würzburg: 2004).

¹⁰ Two further groups of Maimonidean writings remain unexamined in my present description. One is the medical writings that were translated from the first decades of the 14th century onwards and had a great impact on thinkers such as Arnald de Villanova. The other is Maimonides's *Hebrew Encyclopedic Code*, which was constantly used in Christian polemic literature, especially in Raymundus Martini's *Pugio fidei*. For both see Hasselhoff, *Dicit Rabbi Moyses*, 221–80 (polemic literature), and 280–316 (medical literature).

¹¹ See Y. Schwartz, "Final Phases of Medieval Hebraism: Jews and Christians between Bible Exegesis, Talmud and Maimonidean Philosophy," in 1308. *Eine Topographie historischer Gleichzeitigkeit*, ed. Andreas Speer and David Wirmer, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 35 (Berlin: 2010), 296–312; Hasselhoff, note 16 below.

the relative weight of the quotations from the *Guide* in Eckhart's different works and confirm that in its scope and depth Eckhart's encounter with Maimonides's writings have no parallel in the scholastic universe. Eckhart adopts a completely affirmative attitude towards Maimonides's ideas, and does so in a variety of subjects, many of them in regard to which he is the first philosopher in the Latin West to use Maimonidean ideas.

The special place of Maimonides's *Guide* in Eckhart's *Opus tripartitum* is easily demonstrated by means of a quantitative comparison between the numbers of direct references it makes to Maimonides. It is also demonstrated by a comparison between those references and the references to other authors within the same writings. Maimonides's name (and/or direct reference to the *Guide*) appears 119 times in those commentaries, second only to Augustine (567) and Aristotle (206), and is much more important than other Pagan, Muslim, and Christian authorities, such as Avicenna (73), Thomas Aquinas (65), Boethius (63), Averroes (31), Dionysius (21), Proclus (14), and Avicbron (Ibn Gabirol, 13).¹² This general quantitative proportion becomes even more striking when one turns to Eckhart's two major Old Testament commentaries—the so-called “first” *Commentary on Genesis* (39) and the second *Commentary on Exodus* (55). Here the number of quotations from Maimonides's work almost equals the number of quotations from Augustine and transcends by far all other authorities. The only other Christian medieval author who is comparable to Eckhart on such a quantitative account is Albertus Magnus, with the name of Maimonides occurring 120 times in his different writings,¹³ but even here there is no real base for comparison: in Albert's case this absolute number is integrated in a much larger literary corpus, in which other authorities exceed it by far. Moreover, Albert's general attitude toward Maimonides is rather ambivalent, often critical, and in many cases he mentions Maimonides's name among a list of authorities, part of his general tendency to deliver a full account of his philosophic sources. In Eckhart's commentaries, on the contrary, the reader is often confronted with extremely long quotations of Maimonidean discussion, sometimes based on close reading of different parts of the *Guide*. The massive usage of such close reading of the *Guide*

¹² For the precise details see Schwartz, “Zwischen Einheitsmetaphysik und Einheitshermeneutik,” esp. 279.

¹³ See Catarina Rigo, “Zur Rezeption des Moses Maimonides im Werk des Albertus Magnus,” in *Albertus Magnus. Zum Gedenken nach 800 Jahren: Neue Zugänge. Aspekte und Perspektiven*, ed. W. Senner (Berlin: 2001), 29–66; see 36–41.

locates Eckhart near to the hermeneutical praxis common among Jewish Maimonideans from the beginning of the 13th century onwards.¹⁴

Hence Kurt Flasch's otherwise most accurate description of Eckhart's main intellectual sources—Avicenna, Averroes and Maimonides, Albert the Great and Dietrich of Freiberg—falls short of giving a full account of Eckhart's own economy and rhetoric of quotation. Surely one can easily find in Eckhart's writings many points of resemblance to the above mentioned Muslim and Christian authors. But it is no less important to follow Eckhart's own testimony in naming his authorities. Unlike many of his predecessors, precisely unlike Dietrich (who in his turn does not quote Maimonides at all!), Eckhart seldom quotes directly from Averroes's writings or even mentions his name. Also, his Avicenna quotations do not even come close to the quotations from Maimonides either in number or in length. Naturally, many of the ideas Eckhart quotes from Maimonides are commonplace in Arabic philosophy, and Maimonides himself is fully aware, and even proud of, his place within that tradition of Arab, mainly Andalusian, *falasifa*. Indeed, in many places Eckhart prefers to quote Maimonides as the main authority on topics where he could easily quote other sources—Arab or even Latin—as well.¹⁵ Hence it is my claim that by ignoring the motivation of Eckhart in choosing Maimonides as his special source of inspiration, we are unable to understand an essential moment of his engagement with Arabic tradition in general, one that differentiates him from many of his predecessors and successors in the German and the Parisian scholastic tradition.

Elsewhere I have argued that the influence of the *Guide* on Eckhart can be further limited not only to specific writings but also chronologically to the later phases of Eckhart's intellectual activity, most probably after his

¹⁴ See Aviezer Ravitzki, "The Secrets of Maimonides: Between the Thirteenth and the Twentieth Centuries," in Ravitzki, *History and Faith. Studies in Jewish Philosophy* (Amsterdam: 1996), 246–303. For Islamic sources of Eckhart, see Palazzo's chapter in this volume.

¹⁵ One very clear example is found in Eckhart's commentary on Exodus 20:21, where, while commenting on Moses' entrance into the cloud, he quotes Maimonides (*Guide*, 3, 10) before and in a more extensive manner than Dionysius' mystical theology! Another example is Eckhart's detailed quotation of Maimonides's astronomical cosmological theories developed in *Guide* 2, 9–10. See Eckhart, *Liber parabolarum Genesis*, n. 204–13, LW I, 677, 1–689, 14. In *Expositio libri Genesis*, n. 116, LW I, 273, 1–274, 3, commenting on Gen. 1:26: "Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostrum," Eckhart concentrates on the plural "faciamus" which in the Christian–Jewish debate was usually interpreted by the Christians as referring to the Trinity. Eckhart quotes Maimonides at length. The latter understands the plural as referring to God and the secondary causes, teaching that was vehemently rejected by church authorities and by Eckhart's predecessors in the Dominican order.

last period as *magister actu regens* in Paris, 1311–13.¹⁶ It is after this period, and while working on the last version of the *Opus tripartitum*, that Eckhart's encounter with Maimonides reached its unique and most individual form. Eckhart's encounter with the *Guide*, therefore, ran parallel to the stage, which led directly to his later trial and condemnation. This might be relevant for the explanation of two central phenomena of Eckhart's biography: first, there is the fact that Eckhart's *Opus tripartitum* was finalized in an incomplete manner, the way it is transmitted to us today, in a way which is rather different from the original plan drawn up by Eckhart himself in his *Prologus generalis in Opus tripartitum*;¹⁷ and second, the limited but essential role that was given to some central Maimonidean ideas in Eckhart's trial documents. It is to these two points that I would like to turn now.

1. THE MAIMONIDEAN HERMENEUTIC FRAMEWORK OF THE *OPUS TRIPARTITUM*

Before examining the way Eckhart understands and uses Maimonides's hermeneutic ideas, it is important to understand the significance and centrality of these same ideas for Maimonides himself. Indeed, in order to understand the enormous power Moses Maimonides gained in the late medieval period upon Jewish as well as Latin intellectuals as a major source for reception and rejection, it is essential to note that for different parties in different ways Maimonides became an embodiment of the elementary possibility of Jewish philosophizing and of Jewish philosophy.¹⁸

¹⁶ See Schwartz, "Zwischen Einheitsmetaphysik und Einheitshermeneutik," 259–67; and see Hasselhoff, *Moses Maimonides interkulturell gelesen*, 59–71, esp. 64f. Hasselhoff fully accepts this chronology and provides further details on possible sources of inspiration for Eckhart among a group of Parisian theologians of the time (Nicholas of Lyra, Thomas of Ireland, Henry Bate of Malines) who had an interest in Maimonides and could have generated such interest in Eckhart. Certainly one of these Parisian theologians might have evoked Eckhart's interest in a closer reading of Maimonides. Still, the unique shape of the final results of these encounters only emphasizes Eckhart's independent position, also in comparison with his Parisian contemporaries.

¹⁷ This, as Loris Sturlese strongly claimed, was probably composed already in Eckhart's Erfurt period, between the first and the second Parisian magistrate; see Loris Sturlese, "Meister Eckhart in der Bibliotheca Amploniana; Neues zur Datierung des *Opus tripartitum*," in *Die Bibliotheca Amploniana*, ed. Andreas Speer, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 23 (Berlin: 1995), 434–46, see 443.

¹⁸ For a general discussion of the large variety of medieval and modern receptions of Maimonides, see James T. Robinson (ed.), *The Cultures of Maimonideanism: New Approaches to the History of Jewish Thought* (Leiden: 2009).

This immense impact emerged directly from Maimonides's own hermeneutic approach, that is, from the direct linkage created by him between his own theo-philosophical work and the most sacred texts of divine revelation: the Pentateuch. Maimonides's hermeneutics as formulated in the introduction to the *Guide* is a far-reaching manipulation of Rabbinical traditions of esotericism due to his claim that his philosophy is in truth an adequate interpretation of the esoteric content of rabbinical thought (*Ma'ase Bereshit*, i.e. the work of creation, and *Ma'ase Merkabah*, i.e. the work of the chariot) which in its turn reveals the hidden, inner, true meaning of the Mosaic text itself.¹⁹ Maimonides's ability (and authority) to reconstruct the true hidden meaning of the Mosaic text do not derive from belonging to any literal or oral tradition but are solely based on his definition of Moses as the greatest human philosopher. It is Maimonides's philosophic skills, therefore, that enable him to decipher the original (philosophical) *intentio auctoris* that underlies the Mosaic text. Precisely these elements were adopted by Christian writers who were inspired by Maimonides (i.e. not so much by critical readers such as Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, who vehemently reject many of his ideas, but certainly by polemicists such as Ramon Marti, by exegetes such as Nicholas de Lyra, and by the "mystic" Meister Eckhart).

According to the hermeneutics of Maimonides, the esoteric layer of Scripture can be connected with diverse philosophic contents. Sometimes it directs the reader to metaphysics, on other occasions to physics and ethics. However, unlike in the free method of philosophic allegorism, it never refers simultaneously to diverse realms. In his famous interpretation of the biblical simile (Prov. 25:11) "golden apples overlaid with silver net-work," the two realms represent not two inner layers of the esoteric, but diverse relations between "philosophy and law" (i.e. between the most abstract and universal layer of scientific/philosophic discourse) and the political level of accommodation in the daily language of a concrete human community.²⁰ Against the background of such hermeneutical and epistemological monism we can find in the writings of his

¹⁹ See Leo Strauss, "The Literary Character of the Guide for the Perplexed," in Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Chicago: 1980), 38–94; Moshe Halbertal, *Concealment and Revelation: Esotericism in Jewish Thought and its Philosophical Implications*, trans. Jackie Feldman (Princeton, N.J.: 2007).

²⁰ On the principle of accommodation see Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton, N.J.: 1986), 213–71.

successors—philosophers as well as Kabbalists, Jews, and Christians²¹—an alternative understanding of the hermeneutic principle, one that creates an inner hierarchy within the esoteric layer of revelation and thereby refers in its turn to an inner hierarchy within reason itself. Among Christian authors it is probably the Dominican Raimundus Martini (that is, Ramon Marti, c. 1220–c.84), the celebrated author of the *Pugio Fidei*, who first used this simile of Maimonides in his interreligious polemics.²² Meister Eckhart quotes it at length in his *Prologus in Liber parabolarum Genesis* and translates the gold/silver dichotomy into a correspondent series of double notions: outer/inner, physics/metaphysics, Old Testament/New Testament. The text of the Old Testament, to which he dedicates a large part of his *Opus tripartitum*, is thus identified with the physical dimensions of reality, with the literal, outer meaning of revelation, and with the philosophy of Maimonides. To all this Eckhart systematically inserts his own philosophy, identified with the metaphysical truth of the New Testament and with the inner meaning of reality and of scriptural revelation.²³ Ignoring the different opinions concerning the exact composition-order of the *Opus tripartitum*, this general methodological rule explains the similitude between the *Commentary on John* and *Liber parabolarum Genesis* as against the first Genesis commentary. As Eckhart explains in the prologue to *Liber parabolarum Genesis*, the reader who moves from the literal meaning of Scripture into its true parabolic significance finds there the secrets of Trinity and Incarnation. The truth of the Old Testament leads directly to the secrets of the Gospel only if interpreted with the Maimonidean method.

It is this same logic that underlies Eckhart's most articulated expression of the plurality of meanings within the esoteric level of revelation, as formulated in his *Commentary on John*. Here Eckhart compares the revealed truth, as manifested in the writings of the philosophers, in the Old and in the New Testament, or as he puts it, in the writings of Aristotle, Moses,

²¹ For a more detailed description of these thinkers see Yossef Schwartz, "The Esoteric and Inter-religious Aspects of the Relation Philosophy/Kabbalah in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe," *Studia Judaica* 16 (2008), 126–43.

²² See *Raimundi Martini Ordinis Praedicatorum Pugio Fidei Adversus Mauros et Judaeos, cum observationibus Josephi de Voisin et Introductione Jo. Benedicti Carpzovi* (Lipsiae: 1687), 427f.: "R. Moses filius Maimonis in libro qui a Judaeis Moreh Nebbuochim, a Latinis vero dicitur *directio neutrorum* ... תפוחי זהב במשכיות כסף."

²³ It is in this sense that Eckhart expounds the first verse of John (*in principium erat verbum*) as the metaphysical inner layer, facing its physical outer counterpart in the first verse of Genesis (*In principium creavit deum*), see Schwartz, "Meister Eckharts Schriftauslegung als maimonidisches Projekt," 204–08.

and Christ. The inner contents of these diverse revelations are one and the same, while they differ from each other in their epistemic methods as well as in their different grades of certitude. "What Moses, Christ and the Philosopher teach, is therefore the same truth, one that differs only in respect of the way it is related to the believable, the probable and the true."²⁴ For Eckhart, Moses Maimonides himself incorporates this principle by showing the similitude between his faith as a Jew and his rationalistic method as a philosopher. He represents the Old Testament both as the Law of Moses and as the physics of Aristotle. Eckhart as his commentator adds to it the teaching of Christ and the "true" metaphysics of Aristotle.

It is according to these new hermeneutical principles that Eckhart could abandon his old program as laid down in the *Prologus generalis in Opus tripartitum*. There he declared his intention to compose three ambitious works: a massive collection of more than 1000 propositions (*Opus propositionum*) organized in 14 tractates; a systematic commentary work of all the writings of the two testaments (*Opus expositionum*); and then, finally, a scholastic collection of dialectic discussions in the form of academic *quaestiones* (*Opus quaestionum*). Eckhart further explains that these three works shall relate to one another as parts of a logical whole, based on a principle of reduction, in which each part of the *Opus expositionum* derives his explanation from the parallel dialectic reasoning of the *Opus quaestionum*, which in its turn is based in its solution on a correspondent proposition of the *Opus propositionum*.²⁵ There are two certain facts about this construct: first, according to the evidence of the manuscripts it represents an early stage in Eckhart's thought; and second, it was never realized. Although the final version of the *Opus tripartitum* entails many elements that could be easily integrated into a collection of *praepositiones* or *quaestiones*, Eckhart seems to have lost interest in such a complex intertextual structure and concentrated solely on the third opus, that of the expositions on Scripture. Against the claim of many scholars who tend to explain the hermeneutic program formulated in the *Prologus in liber parabolarum Genesis* as the construction of a new project, it is important to argue that in fact this program gives the most accurate

²⁴ Meister Eckhart, *Expositio Sancti evangelii secundum Iohannem*, 185; LW III, 155, 5–7: "Idem ergo est quod docet Moyses, Christus et Philosophus, solum quantum ad modum differens, scilicet ut credibile, probabile sive versimile et veritas."

²⁵ *Prologus generalis in Opus tripartitum*, 11; LW I, 156, 4–7: "Tertio et ultimo est praenotandum quod opus secundum, similiter et tertium sic dependent a primo opere, scilicet propositionum, quod sine ipso sunt parvae utilitatis, eo quod quaestionum declarationes et auctoritatum expositiones plerumque fundantur supra aliquam propositionum."

description of the *Opus tripartitum* as it has finally reached our hands. Still, the latest formulation of Eckhart's major systematic work testifies to a replacement of his reductionist method with a new methodology that searches for the philosophic principle of explanation in the deeper level of the sacred text itself.²⁶

This new hermeneutic principle has been systematically formulated, as I just claimed, in Eckhart's prologue to *Liber parabolarum Genesis*. This prologue resembles to a great degree the introduction of Maimonides's *Guide*, mostly since Eckhart constructs his all-hermeneutic approach here on a similar notion of *parable*. While using Augustine and other common sources of Christian hermeneutics in order to explain his basic attitude toward the interpretation of divine words, Eckhart relies on Maimonides in order to develop a certain version of philosophic allegorism, one that does not present itself as "mystical," "anagogical," or "moral," but intends to grasp the literal sense of the Scriptures (i.e. the one that corresponds with the real "*intentio auctoris*" of Moses, the philosopher-prophet).

As a theologian Eckhart understands theology primarily as hermeneutics; his Latin corpus is organized not according to the established curriculum of university dogmatic theology but according to the curriculum dictated by the inner structure of the interpreted biblical scriptures. As a commentator Eckhart reveals himself, however, primarily as a philosopher, grasping philosophy both as the inner layer of the literary level of the books he interprets and as the ultimate key to revealing of its meaning.²⁷

²⁶ For Eckhart's early principle of reduction see *Prologus generalis in Opus tripartitum*, 11; LW I, 156, 4–7: "Tertio et ultimo est praenotandum quod opus secundum, similiter et tertium sic dependent a primo opere, scilicet propositionum, quod sine ipso sunt parvae utilitatis, eo quod quaestionum declarationes et auctoritatum expositiones plerumque fundantur supra aliquam propositionum." For the metaphysical value of the New Testament see *Expositio. evangelii sec. Iohannem* 2; LW III, 4, 4–6: "In cuius verbi expositione et aliorum quae sequuntur, intentio est auctoris, sicut et in omnibus suis editionibus, ea quae sacra asserit fides christiana et utriusque testamenti scriptura, exponere per rationes naturales philosophorum."

²⁷ The hermeneutic nature of Eckhart's theology is evident when examining his theological work which is almost solely composed of Biblical commentaries. Also his sermons, which form the other major part of his work, in a certain manner appear to be a "sermonial" exegesis. On Eckhart's hermeneutics in general see Joseph Koch, "Sinn und Struktur der Schriftauslegungen Meister Eckharts," *Kleine Schriften* 1 (Rome: 1973), 399–428; Eberhard Winkler, *Exegetische Methoden bei Meister Eckhart* (Tübingen: 1965); Karl Weiss, "Die Hermeneutik des Meister Eckhart," *Studia Theologica* 21 (1967), 1–12; Donald F. Duclow, "Hermeneutics and Meister Eckhart," *Philosophy Today* 28 (1984), 36–43; Duclow, "Meister Eckhart on the Book of Wisdom: Commentary and Sermons," *Traditio* 43 (1987), 215–35; Wouter Goris, "Prout iudicaverit expedire: Zur Interpretation des zweiten Prologs zum Opus expositionum Meister Eckharts," *Medioevo* 20 (1994), 233–78; Goris, *Einheit als Prinzip und*

In his commentary on Exodus 24:12, when explaining the highest degree of religious experience attained by Moses in terms of mystical union, Eckhart suggests that Moses was not climbing "on the mountain," but as the Latin text of the Vulgata reads "in montem." That, as Eckhart explains, is equivalent to the operation of the "in-tellectus," which "enters into the principles of the thing and there receives the thing in its principle, in its root and origin."²⁸ This movement toward the inner parts of the self is ontologically based on the metaphysical paradox of the relation between God and the world. God is simultaneously the most transcendent and most immanent entity. Through reflection and self-reflection man is called to reveal within himself the innermost part of the Godhead, that is, to discover soul within body, inner knowledge within uninstructed personality, sacred within the profane. As we shall see, the most crucial difference between Eckhart and Maimonides is precisely in regard to the legitimate interpreter of the Scriptures. For Maimonides, the philosopher is the only worthy lawgiver and the only legitimate law-interpreter, while for Eckhart the essential message of Christian revelation is that of God incarnated, the eternal birth of the transcendent in the midst of immanent reality. The postulate of reconstructing this divine act by every human being necessarily includes the belief in the universal potency of understanding.

It is here that Eckhart's program can be seen as part of the systematic vernacularization of Arab elitist intellectual religiosity, which also locates him close to some contemporary Jewish Maimonideans who made provocative usage of Maimonides's esotericism as part of their public pedagogic enterprise. It was precisely that kind of pedagogical praxis which provoked the long series of the Maimonidean controversies within Jewish communities, especially in Spain, Italy, and Provence. The last of these public controversies took place in southern France and Catalonia and was abruptly ended by the deportation of the Jewish community from the territories of the king of France in 1306, a few years before Eckhart made his acquaintance with the Latin translation of Maimonides's Guide.²⁹

Ziel: Versuch über die Einheitsmetaphysik des Opus tripartitum Meister Eckharts (Leiden: 1997), 9–51; Ruedi Imbach, "La filosofia nel prologo di S. Giovanni secondo S. Agostino, S. Tommaso e Meister Eckhart," in *Studi 1995*, ed. D. Lorenz and S. Serafini (Rome: 1995), 161–82.

²⁸ *Expositio Lib. Exodi*, 265; LW II, 213, 11–14: "Sequitur: in montem. Nota: non ait ad montem. Ratio videtur: amor enim et voluntas ad rem ipsam respiciunt et in ipsa sistunt et quiescent. Intellectus vero non sistit in re ipsa in se ipsa, sed iuxta nomen intellectus intrat ad ipsa rei principia et ibi rem accipit in principiis suis in radice et origine."

²⁹ The most comprehensive study of the Maimonidean controversies, though in great need of corrections, is Joseph Sarachek, *Faith and Reason: The Conflict over the Rationalism*

2. THE RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE OF DIVINE ATTRIBUTES

Similar to the hermeneutical realm, Eckhart's metaphysics reflect both his strong empathy with the ideas he found in Maimonides and the different path along which he finally directs these ideas. Indeed, Eckhart, as an original and somewhat less cautious thinker than Maimonides, repeatedly directs Maimonides's ideas and formulations beyond their original meaning. The great honor that the Dominican Master displays to his Jewish predecessor did not prevent him from providing a tendentious reading that led to a radicalization of the views that he adopted.

If the hermeneutic principles of Maimonides had been shaping Eckhart's final methodology, then it was Maimonides's extreme unitarian metaphysics and negative theology that mostly dominated the content of Eckhart's quotations from the *Guide*, up until the very last one, to be found in the papal bull. The 23rd article of the bull of Pope John XXII entails a direct quotation of Maimonides's *Guide*, part 1, chapters 50–51, concerning God's absolute unity, one that—according to Maimonides—transcends any kind of plurality either in reality or in thought.³⁰ The most interesting fact concerning this article, which was included already in the earliest inquisitorial list, was that in the first list it was indeed attributed to Maimonides.³¹ Accordingly, Eckhart could easily dismiss the charge by pointing to the fact that the condemned thesis is merely an innocent quotation that does not represent his own thought. The fact that Maimonides's name was omitted from the following two lists seems to be a direct result of Eckhart's decision, in his answer to the first list, to defend

of Maimonides (Williamsport, Penn.: 1935); for the controversy of 1303–06 see G. Freudenthal, "Holiness and Defilement: The Ambivalent Perception of Philosophy by its Opponents in the Early Fourteenth Century," in *Gli Ebrei e le Scienze*, *Micrologus Library* 9 (2001), 169–93; G. Stern, "Philosophy in Southern France: Controversy over Philosophic Study and the Influence of Averroes upon Jewish Thought," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, ed. D.H. Frank and O. Leaman (Cambridge: 2003), 281–303; see Schwartz, "Final Turn."

³⁰ H. Denifle OP, "Acten zum Processe Meister Eckeharts," in *Archiv für Literatur—Berlin, r Litteratur des Mittelund Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalrs*, vol. 2, ed. Denifle and F. Ehrle, SJ (Berlin: 1886), 616–40, see 638: "Vicesimustertius articulus. Deus est unus omnibus modis et secundum omnem rationem, ita ut in ipso non sit invenire aliquam multitudinem in intellectu vel extra intellectum; qui enim duo videt vel distinctionem videt, deum non videt, deus enim est extra numerum et supra numerum, nec ponit in unum cum aliquo." T. Suarez Nani, "Philosophie- und theologiehistorische Interpretation der in der Bulle von Avignon zensurierten Sätze," in *Eckardus Theutonicus, homo doctus et sanctus*, ed. H. Stirnimann and R. Imbach (Fribourg: 1992), 31–96, see 80–85.

³¹ See Acta Echaridiana 46 (Proc. Col. I, n. 46), in LW V, 214, 13–17: "Deus est unus . . . extra intellectum," ut Rabbi Moyses l.I c 50, 'qui enim duo . . .,' see also LW V, 313, 16–24; Reffke, "Studien zum Problem der Entwicklung," 85.

the claim, making it by this very act into his own.³² By doing so Eckhart identified himself at the very end of his life, in a moment of deep crisis and in the strongest possible way, with his Jewish predecessor. It is no coincidence that he would have done so concerning a metaphysical claim most central both to himself and to Maimonides.

The ontotheological claim concerning God's absolute unity is integrated in the *Guide* within the general discussion of divine attributes to which Maimonides dedicates the major part of Book 1. Maimonides's discussion of divine attributes provides the reader with one of the most radical formulations of negative theology in medieval thought.³³ Meister Eckhart not only quotes the whole Maimonidean discussion, especially in his *Commentary on Exodus*, but also develops it in rather unexpected directions.

Maimonides is known for his extreme formulation of God's unity and incorporeality based on a radical linguistic usage of the principle of equivocation, one that culminates in his assertion that being/existence itself, when attributed to God and to any other creature, is equivocal. This means that human cognition, based on direct and indirect experience of the created universe, would never be able to grasp either the essence of God or the full meaning of the (true) proposition "God exists." This attitude was severely criticized by Thomas Aquinas, who (especially in *Summa* 1, 13) formulates against it his theory of analogy, which is strongly adjusted by Eckhart in favor of a theory that moves between the radical transcendence of the absolute one God on the one hand and its immanence on the other.³⁴

Maimonides's metaphysics of equivocation was based on his strong denial of any relation whatsoever between the Creator and creation and therefore also of any kind of similarity.³⁵ In his *Commentary on Exodus*,

³² Vgl. "Magistri Echaridi responsio ad articulos sibi impositos de scriptis et dictis suis," in Loris Sturlese (ed.), *LW V*, 291, 10–12: "Ad decimum cum dicitur: 'Deus est unus omnibus modis et secundum omnem rationem' etc. Dico quod verum est sicut iacet et consonat scripturae canonis, sanctorum et doctorum."

³³ For some modern encounters with Maimonides's concept of negation see Ehud Z. Benor, "Meaning and Reference in Maimonides' Negative Theology," *Harvard Theological Review* 88 (1995), 339–60; Hilary Putnam, "On Negative Theology," *Faith and Philosophy* 14 (1997), 407–22.

³⁴ For Eckhart's usage of analogy see Joseph Koch, "Zur Analogielehre Meister Eckharts," in Koch, *Kleine Schriften* 1 (Rome: 1973), 367–97; Burkhard Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart: Analogie, Unvovizität und Einheit* (Hamburg: 1983).

³⁵ See Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 1, 56, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: 1963), 130: "Know that likeness is a certain relation between two things and that in case where no relation can be supposed to exist between two things, no likeness between them

Eckhart agrees with Maimonides's assertion on this matter and borrows three of Maimonides's arguments in order to support it. But then he adds another, "more subtle" argument of his own ("Posset tamen fortassis subtilior ratio assignari"), one that, in fact, turns Maimonides's logic on its head. There is no possible relation between God and the created universe since any relation between two entities must be based on the prior recognition of those two entities as separate from each other. Created being, however, cannot be grasped apart from being itself, which is God ("esse est Deus"). Since there is no possibility of true ontological differentiation between Creator and creatures there can be no true relation between them as well.³⁶

In *Guide* 1:50–63, after the long philological lexicographic discussion of chapters 1–49, where Maimonides attempted to demonstrate divine unity and incorporeality in spite of so many biblical and rabbinical quotations that seem to assert the opposite, Maimonides turned to a systematic discussion of divine attributes in general. The last three chapters of this section were dedicated to a discussion of the two most sublime attributes: the Tetragrammaton and the utterance made by God himself when answering Moses' question in Exod. 3:14. Maimonides defines the first as a private name, one that has no derivations whatsoever.³⁷ Consequently, this name is also the most sacred and hidden, to such a degree that nobody knows either its meaning or even its exact way of pronunciation. The second, discussed in Chapter 63, is introduced by Maimonides not as name but

can be represented to oneself. Similarly in all cases in which there is no likeness between two things, there is no relation between them. . . . Accordingly, in view of the fact that the relation between us and Him, may he be exalted, is considered as nonexistent—I mean the relation between Him and that which is other than He—it follows necessarily that likeness between Him and us should also be considered nonexistent."

³⁶ *Expositio libri Exodi*, 40; LW II, 45, 7–14: "Posset tamen fortassis subtilior ratio assignari, quare nulla comparatio cadit inter deum et creaturam, quare talis est: omnis comparans aliqua accipit illa ad minus ut duo et ut distincta. Nihil enim sibimet comparatur nec est sibimet simile. Omne autem ens creatum acceptum vel conceptum seorsum per se distinctum a deo non est ens, sed est nihil. Separatum enim et distinctum a deo separatum est et distinctum ab esse, quia ab ipso deo, per ipsum et in ipso quaecumque sunt 'et sine ipso factum est nihil,' Ioh. 1, et Act. 17: 'in ipso vivimus, movemur et sumus.'"

³⁷ *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 1, 61; Pines, 147: "All the names of God, may He be exalted, that are to be found in any of the books derive from Actions. There is nothing secret in this matter. The only exception is one name: namely, Yod, He, Vav, He. This is the name of God, may He be exalted, that has been originated without any derivation, and for this reason it is called the articulated name. This means that this name gives a clear unequivocal indication of His essence, may He be exalted. On the other hand, all the other great names give their indication in an equivocal way, being derived from terms signifying actions in the like of which, as we have made clear, exist as our own actions."

as complex speech-act, the answer God himself gave when Moses asked him for his name: "I am that I am." Maimonides introduces this verse as a syllogism, one which shall not be read as mere tautology, since its subject and predicate, though identical in their Hebrew root, stands for two different technical philosophic notions, that of being (or "to be") and that of existence. God's answer provides Moses with a verbal argument to enable him to convince the sons of Israel that he is speaking on behalf of the true God. In its conclusion, however, the suggested syllogism given to Moses through direct divine inspiration leads its hearer to understand that God is the "necessary existence," far beyond any possible linguistic description.³⁸

In his discussion of the Tetragrammaton, Maimonides relates the ontological signification of the name directly to its linguistic and epistemological character:

Hence Scripture promises that an apprehension that will put an end to this delusion will come to men. Thus it says: *In that day shall the Lord be one, and His name one*; which means that in the same way as He is one, He will be invoked at that time by one name only, by that which is indicative only of the essence and which is not derivative. In the *Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer* they have said: *Before the world was created, there were only the Holy One, blessed be He, and His name*. Consider now how this dictum states clearly that all the derivative names have come into being after the world has come into being.³⁹

In asserting the absolute divine unity, which is reflected in the private irreducible name of God, one which precedes the world and at the same time one which posits the world with its last telos, Maimonides suggests that the final religious epistemic act is that which transcends the world to its pretemporal unity. Yet even this most sublime religious consciousness is derived from the realm of language analysis.

A central tension present in Maimonides's discussion in Guide I, 60–63 concerns the real difference between two speech acts, one that seems to derive from their different syntax. While the Tetragrammaton directly denotes the transcendent nature of the divine, the "syllogism" "I am that I am" discursively demonstrates it. To one who understands its true meaning there is no difference between the two, as both names direct their hearer towards the limit of human cognition and language, hence

³⁸ *The Guide of the Perplexed*, 1, 63; Pines, 154–55.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 148–49.

to an active silence at their final conclusion. However, Maimonides is clear concerning the fact that within the boundaries and limitations of language, if one is not choosing the supreme and natural option of silence one shall limit the scope of metaphysical claim to that which directs us to the unique mode of divine "necessary existence."⁴⁰ Being limited to his natural capacities as created being, man is left with the need either to deliver a definition of the essence of God, which is impossible, or to reach the supreme language of identity/tautology, which, according to Maimonides, is an empty and meaningless language.

If Maimonides's most central ontometaphysical distinction is the one based on his assertion regarding the equivocation of being,⁴¹ then Eckhart, using the authority of Maimonides himself, turns it here into an absolute univocation. Eckhart's discussion of the matter in his *Commentary on Exodus* reflects his familiarity with the discussion of Maimonides as well as that of Thomas Aquinas, who also reflected on the same chapters of Maimonides's *Guide*.⁴² In the beginning of his commentary on Exodus 3:14, Eckhart suggests "Rabbi Moses in treating this passage 'I am that I am'

⁴⁰ *The Guide of the Perplexed* 1, 61; Pines, 148: "Perhaps it [the articulated name] indicates the notion of a necessary existence;" Ch. 63; Pines, 155: "This notion [I am that I am] may be summarized and interpreted in the following way: the existent that is the existent, or the necessarily existent."

⁴¹ See *Guide of the Perplexed* 1, 52; Pines, 117f.: "Now He, may He be exalted, has a necessary existence while that which is other than He has a possible existence, as we shall make clear. There accordingly can be no correlation between them... How then can a relation be represented between Him and what is other than He when there is no notion comprising in any respect both of the two, inasmuch as existence is, in our opinion, affirmed by Him, may He be exalted, and of what is other than He merely by way of absolute equivocation."

⁴² Thomas makes a clear distinction between the two names. He does so during his discussion of divine attributes in the *Summa theologiae*, 1, q. 13, a discussion that reflects his familiarity with the notions of Maimonides quoted above. The aim of Thomas is to separate, as much as possible, the incommunicable nature of God, as reflected in the denotational language of the Tetragrammaton, from that discursive nature of God, as reflected not only in a verse such as "I am that I am" but in the very nature of being itself. This is the realm from which the theory of analogy emerges and this is the locus where its ontological and linguistic implications meet. There is no way to speak about God in his essential side which is linguistically reflected in his "private name," almost impossible even to pronounce. On the other hand, one might and should develop a rational and differentiated discourse of the divine, one which derives its power from the analogy of being. Without mentioning Maimonides's name, Thomas's discussion reflects a direct knowledge of the *Guide* and a correct understanding of the separate nature of the two names. Thomas refuses, however, to preserve the Maimonidean ambiguity concerning the way that being, in its divine aspect, is related to the incommunicable private name of God. See Bernard McGinn, "Introduction," in *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, ed. Bernard McGinn, 15–30; Y. Schwartz, "From Negation to Silence: Maimonides' Reception in the Latin West," *Iyyun* 45 (1996), 389–404 [in Hebrew].

seems to think that it is the name 'Tetragramaton' or one like it "which is sacred and separated, written, and not pronounced, and alone signifies the naked and pure substance of the creator."⁴³

It is clear from this passage that Eckhart strives to escape the ambiguity of Maimonides in favor of a definitive identification of the two names. That the key for such an identification and its possible implications lies in the interpretation of the notion of being is reflected in a more radical claim to be raised by Eckhart in his commentary on Exodus 20:7 ("You shall not take the name of your God in vain"):

Someone might perhaps think that Existence is the name of four letters itself [i.e. the Tetragramaton], because the term "existence" (esse) has literally four letters and many hidden properties and perfections. It also does not seem to be derived from a work nor express any participation. But this is enough.⁴⁴

In his philosophical concept of language Eckhart moves here not from analogy to univocation,⁴⁵ but rather between the two opposite poles of equivocation and univocation. This move is reflected within the nature of language in the shift from the discursive act reflected in Exodus 3:14 to its tautological conclusion, and hence to the univocal understanding of the equivocal nature of the Tetragrammaton. Eckhart's radical interpretation is followed by an understanding of the nature of tautology, different from the one suggested by Maimonides. In *Guide* 1:51, a chapter well known by Eckhart, Maimonides rejects any usage of tautological claims: "If, however, the attribute were the essence of the thing of which it is predicated, the attribute would be either a tautology—as if you were saying that 'man is man'—or the attribute would be a mere explanation of a term. . . ."⁴⁶ Eckhart's claim in the *Prologus generalis in Opus tripartitum* that "no proposition is truer than that in which the same is predicated on itself, for example that 'man is a man,'"⁴⁷ stands in perfect opposition

⁴³ Meister Eckhart, *Expositio libri Exodi*, 19; LW II, 25, 3–6: "Notandum quod Rabbi Moyses, (l. 1, cap. 65) hoc verbum tractans: 'sum qui sum,' videtur velle quod ipsum est 'nomen Tetragrammaton' aut proximum illi, quod est sanctum et separatum, quod scribitur et non legitur, et ipsum solum significat substantiam creatoris nudam et puram." English trans. McGinn, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, 47.

⁴⁴ Eckhart, *Expositio libri Exodi* 164, LW II, 144, 9–12: "Et fortassis videri alicui quod esse esset ipsum nomen quattuor litterarum. Ad litteram enim li esse habet quattuor litteras, multas proprietates et perfectiones latentes. Ipsum etiam non videtur 'sumptum ab opere nec dictum a participatione.' Sed haec hactenus."

⁴⁵ As Burkhard Mojsisch claims in his monograph on Eckhart's philosophy; see Mojsisch, *Eckhart: Analogie, Univozität und Einheit* (Hamburg: 1983).

⁴⁶ *Guide of the Perplexed*, 1, 51; Pines, 112–13.

⁴⁷ Meister Eckhart, *Prologus generalis in opus tripartitum*, 13; LW I, 158, 11–12.

to that claim of Maimonides. Here Eckhart moves from within the Aristotelian framework to a much more Platonic “ontological” thought, one that represents an inner act of comprehension. He further develops it into a mystic ontological paradox, between divine immanence and transcendence, as understood both ontologically and epistemologically (“totus intus—totus foris”).

This general interpretation of some Maimonidean key notions in Eckhart’s Latin commentaries do not necessarily imply any change in our present picture of the essential, well-known elements of Eckhart’s concept of language as present throughout his writings. Eckhart’s concept of language always seems rather pessimist and negative, one that locates language completely within the realm of the created universe, far away from the divine realm.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, at some points in his *Commentary on Exodus*, Eckhart’s speculations appear to take a rather different path. Here Eckhart integrates into Maimonides’s teachings concerning divine names a series of magical interpretations, which very easily are reminiscent of Jewish Kabbalists such as Abraham Abulafia⁴⁹ and Joseph Gikatilah⁵⁰ as well as those of a philosophic mind such as Moses of Narbonne (Narboni)⁵¹ in their parallel interpretations to *Guide* 1, 62. In this integration of magical ideas into the thought of Maimonides, Eckhart stands alongside Arnald of Villanova in his *Allocutio super significatione nominis Tetragrammaton*.⁵² This anticipates the well-known humanist speculations of Pico della Mirandola and his followers.⁵³

⁴⁸ See L. Seppänen, *Meister Eckharts Konzeption der Sprachbedeutung: Sprachliche Welterschöpfung und Tiefenstruktur in der mittelalterlichen Scholastik und Mystik?* (Tübingen: 1985); Michel Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying* (Chicago: 1994), 146–79.

⁴⁹ Abraham Abulafia, *Life of the Soul (Haye ha-Nefesh)*, 1, x–xi, ed. Weiss, 44–49; Moshe Idel, “Maimonides and Kabbalah,” in *Studies in Maimonides*, ed. Isidore Twersky (Cambridge, Mass.: 1990), 31–81, see 66.

⁵⁰ Yoseph B. Gikatilya, *Sefer Ginat Egoz* (Hanau: 1615), 3b–11a; Gershom Scholem, “Gikatilla,” in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 7, 564–65, dates Gikatilya’s studies by Abulafia to the years 1272–74. *Ginat Egoz* was written in 1274.

⁵¹ See Narbonni’s commentary to *Guide* 1, 62, in *Shloshe Kadmonai Mefarshei ha-Moreh* (Vienna: 1853; repr. Jerusalem: 1961), 11a.

⁵² Cf. J.C. Artau, “La ‘Allocutio super tetragrammaton’ de Arnaldo de Villanova,” *Sefarad* 9 (1949), 75–105; Arnaldi de Villanova, *Allocutio super significatione nominis Tetragrammaton*, ed. C.J. Perarnau, Arnaldi de Villanova Opera Theologica Omnia III (Barcelona: 2004), 139–204. In one place Arnaldo’s text seems to be Eckhart’s direct source of some Kabbalistic theory of letters, and see *Allocutio*, ed. Perarnau, 141, 57–60; Meister Eckhart, *Expositio libri Exodi*, n. 151–54, LW II, 134, 16–138, 4.

⁵³ Especially in Pico’s famous assertion that “Just as Aristotle disguised and concealed the more divine philosophy, which the ancient philosophers veiled under tales and fables, under the mask of philosophical speculation and in the brevity of words, so Rabbi Moses

In fact, Christian authors throughout the Middle Ages, especially since Jerome, are fully aware of the existence of a developed doctrine concerning God's substantive name as a concrete sign of absolute and esoteric knowledge and as a central instrument for the achievement of mystical and magical powers.⁵⁴ When coming to discuss one of God's secret names, mentioned by Maimonides in *Guide* 1:62, the name of 42 letters, Eckhart combines assertions he reads in Maimonides with the hermetic tradition known to him through other Arabic sources (*Picatrix*, Ps. Alkindi's *De Radiis* etc.).⁵⁵

Rabbi Moses writes four things about the name of forty-two letters. . . . It is possible that not only the name but also the numerical value of the letters . . . signify some perfection in God. They could indicate perfections and properties of the divine nature with regard to the order of letters in the names, their nature and their shape, just as, for example, with us the secondary "stars" of the lower regions (whether in the air, the clouds, water, the earth and things growing on the earth) point to the superior nature and properties of the heavenly primarily stars. . . . because inferior things signify in the nature, shape, order and number of superior things, just as effects signify their causes. Alchemy, geomancy, pyromancy and many similar sciences trust in this. . . . The third point is that the things signified by these names are not to be taken "at face value," but according to the secret hidden thing they signify. For example, with alchemist the name "sun" means gold, the name "moon," silver, and so on. So too, Aristotle often attacks the surface meaning of Plato rather than the inner sense. The fourth point . . . This

the Egyptian, in the book the Latins call *dux neutrorum*, while in the superficial shell of words appears to move with the philosophers, in hidden insights of a profound sense enfolds the mysteries of the Cabala." See Pico della Mirandola, *Conclusiones cabalisticæ numero LXXI secundum opinionem propriam, ex ipsis Hebraeorum sapientium fundamentis christianam religionem maxime confirmantes*, 11<63, in *Syncretism in the West: Pico's 900 Theses (1486) with Text, Translation, and Commentary*, ed. S.A. Farmer (Tempe, Ariz.: 1998), 546: "Sicut Aristoteles diuiniorum philosophiam, quam philosophi antiqui sub fabulis uelant, ipse sub philosophicæ speculationis facie dissimulauit et uerborum breuitate obscurauit, ita Rabbi Moyses aegyptius, in libro qui a latinis dicitur *dux neutrorum*, dum per superficiale uerborum corticem uidetur cum Philosophis ambulare, per latentes profundis sensus intelligentias, mysteria complectitur Cabalae."

⁵⁴ The manner of Christian acquaintance with forms of "hebraica veritas," as found in Jerome and Origen, was gathered in the early Middle Ages by Isidore of Seville in the seventh book of his *Etymologies*, see Sancti Isidori Hispalensis *Etymologiarum sive Originum Libri XX* [PL 82], Lib. VII, Cap. i, 3–16; see especially his interpretation of the names "qui est" (cap. I, §10), "ego sum qui sum" (§ 11–12), and "Tetragrammaton" (§16).

⁵⁵ *Expositio libri Exodi*, n. 151–54, LW II, 134, 16–138, 4; Schwartz, "Zwischen Einheitsmetaphysik und Einheitshermeneutik," 272–75; see also Dagmar Gottschall, "'Man möchte wunder tuon mit worten' (Predigt 18). Zum Umgang Meister Eckharts mit Wörtern in seinen deutschen Predigten," in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt*, ed. A. Speer and L. Wegener, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 32 (Berlin: 2005), 427–49.

is why the sages have said: "The forty-two letter name is holy and sanctified. . . ." After this he [Maimonides] adds: "What a distance there is between what people understand . . . the grasp of the Agent Intellect."

The main question here seems to be what Eckhart's motivation is in his sudden move from the pure negative assertions to the magical concept of language. The answer to this question seems almost obvious and adjusts perfectly with the basic move described in this chapter: it is different from the polemical motivation of Raimundus Martini and from the scientific medical motivation of Arnald of Villanova. Indeed, it is here that Eckhart turns to the Rabbinic esoteric tradition brought to him by Maimonides in order to find another solution to the tension underlying his encounter with Maimonides throughout his writings. The magical/alchemical transmission he is looking for is not combined with the manipulation of any physical reality but with the transformation of the human soul (i.e. with "the grasp of the agent intellect"). Only language can perform this miracle, the language of Eckhart the preacher, translating the most sublime arcane wisdom into the hearts of his German audience.

3. EPILOGUE—MYSTICISM AS ETHICAL IMPERATIVE

Eckhart's encounter with Maimonides's Guide of the Perplexed is much richer than the few examples brought forward in this short discussion. It includes moral assertions, physical and cosmological interpretations of the Mosaic passages, and different pieces of information based on Eckhart's thorough study of the Guide. Yet, I believe that the two topics depicted in this chapter shed light on the deepest motives behind Eckhart's unique reading of Maimonides.

Eckhart's sermon on the poverty of the soul (n. 52 in the Stuttgart edition)⁵⁶ is one of the single texts, in which Eckhart, addressing his hearers directly, repeatedly pronounces the problem of understanding. He does so in the beginning, middle, and closing lines of the sermon, saying that: "Now I beg you to be disposed to what I say, for I say to you in ever-

⁵⁶ See Largier 1, 550–63; F. Pfeiffer, *Deutsche Mystiker des vierzehnten Jahrhunderts*, vol. 2: Meister Eckhart (Göttingen: 1914; first edition: 1857), 280–84; *Deutsche Predigten und Traktate*, edited and translated by J. Quint. (Munich: 1955), 303–09; Kurt Flasch provides a new critical edition and commentary to that Sermon in the new project of *Lectura Eckhardi*, K. Flasch, "Predigt 52: 'Beati pauperes spiritu,'" in *Lectura Eckhardi*, ed. G. Steer and L. Sturlese (Stuttgart: 1998), 163–99; see also C. Rizek-Pfister, *Ein Weg zu Meister Eckharts Armutspredigt* (Bern: 2000).

lasting truth that if you are unlike this truth of which we want to speak, you cannot understand me.⁵⁷ ... There is no need to understand this. ... Whoever does not understand what I have said, let him not burden his heart with it; for as long as a man is not equal to this truth, he will not understand these words, for this is a truth beyond speculation that comes immediately from the heart of God."⁵⁸

It is only from the intellectual state of perfection that his words might be properly understood by the listener. But in such a perfect state the human subject is already united with the absolute autonomous and creative spirit (i.e. does not need any more the evocative power of the sermon). By addressing his audience directly, Eckhart suggests a dichotomy between two sorts of hearers—those who are able to understand his words do not need them anymore, while the others, those that are not yet there and therefore cannot grasp the real meaning of the words, are faced here with a demanding absolute imperative calling them to transcend their cognitive capacities, combined with an eschatological promise of perfection and salvation.⁵⁹

Eckhart's mysticism is characterized precisely by its dual intention, being directed toward the uneducated yet without any compromise relating to its strong intellectual character. His attitude toward the philosophical problematization of human intellectual perfection⁶⁰ locates him between Arab rationalism (Alfarabi, Avicenna, Averroes, and Maimonides) on the one hand, and the Christian philosophy of revelation and grace on the other. In such a discussion of man's perfection or, religiously speaking, of man's salvation,⁶¹ Arab philosophy was identified in Latin scholastic thought primarily with a version of the perfect human state based on natural reasoning. Man's final perfection lies in the potential,

⁵⁷ DW II, 487, 5–7.

⁵⁸ DW II, 506, 1–3.

⁵⁹ Another example can be found in the papal bull *In agro dominico*, article 10, in which the following quotation of Eckhart is given: "We shall all be transformed totally into God and changed into him. In the same way, when the sacrament bread is changed into Christ's body, I am so changed into him that he makes me his one existence, and not just similar. By the living God it is true that there is no distinction there." The quotation is taken from Sermon 6; and see T. Suárez-Nani, "Philosophie- und Theologiegeschichtliche Interpretationen," 59ff.

⁶⁰ On the relationship of Eckhart to Dietrich, especially in the recent context see Flasch, "Zum Ursprung," 17f.

⁶¹ See Andreas Speer, "Philosophie als Lebensform? Zum Verhältnis von Philosophie und Weisheit im Mittelalter," *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 62 (2000), 3–25, see esp. 17–19. Speer's description, however, completely ignores the role Arabic thought had played in this tradition.

to be realized only by a few chosen philosophers (or prophets, or philosopher-prophets), to be united with the separate agent intellect. In that epistemological process man is elevated beyond his state of contingency, typical to the sub-lunar realm, beyond his concrete personal ego, beyond community, and beyond language. He breaks through from history into the Adamic prehistoric perfect state, while breaking out from contingent reality into the natural and eternal realm of agent intellect.

This epistemology was severely criticized by Eckhart's forefathers in the Dominican order, especially by Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, on behalf of an Aristotelian and Christian notion of individuality and personality. Both denied the cosmic united active intellect suggested by Arab philosophy as an idealistic Platonic construct that is totally foreign to the nature of Aristotelian psychology and epistemology. And still, if one takes Averroes and Aquinas as representatives of the opposite attitudes, then one can easily point out that both men interpret Aristotle's famous claim in the beginning of the *Metaphysics* that "all men by nature desire knowledge"⁶² as stating that man has a natural inclination towards a goal which can be achieved only outside all that constitutes individual personality (Averroes) or else supernaturally (Aquinas).⁶³

Now unlike Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, whose names became trivial marks of classic positions within the debate, Maimonides's name was usually not involved, most probably thanks to the fact that he wrote no systematic treatise on the soul/intellect nor was he a systematic commentator on Aristotle. Maimonides derives, however, much of his philosophic motivation precisely from that epistemologic problem, and in his general approach toward the problem of human knowledge and human perfection he combines Averroes's intellectualism with Aquinas's theologically oriented social commitment. It is this combination that raises the problem of redemption as the central ethical and religious issue for his thought. As a religious philosopher he suggests two patterns of progress towards redemption that simultaneously reflect the divine presence

⁶² *Aristotelis Metaphysica*, 980a; ed. W. Jaeger (Oxford: 1957), 1.

⁶³ All that is directly connected with Aquinas's argument in favor of the priority of theology as science that, differing from all other human sciences, is subordinated directly and solely to divine wisdom; see Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super librum Boethii De trinitate*, 2, 2; ed. B. Decker (Leiden: 1965), 89, 5–14. Its absolute fulfillment lies in the mind and in the act of cognition preserved for the angels and for the souls of the blessed (beati) after death. For the vision of the blessed as a central issue for Thomas's epistemology, see Dominic J. O'Meara, "Eriugena and Aquinas on the Beatific Vision," in *Eriugena Redivivus*, ed. W. Beierwaltes (Heidelberg: 1987), 224–38.

in nature, in human history, and in the individual soul. In that sense the realm of the divine becomes open simultaneously to the collective and personal history, while the individual is defined as the locus in which both realms meet as man becomes an active agent in history as a political ruler and lawgiver in the Platonic sense.⁶⁴ Good and Truth are two paradigms that meet together in the personality of such a philosopher king and meet again as a normative ideal that must lie beneath his legislative action.

But Maimonides was a philosopher. In matters of epistemology, the sole kind of true philosophy was for him the Aristotelian, and within its structure he allows no shortcuts or popularized formulations, since he acknowledges only one structure of knowledge (i.e. the rational discursive). True enough, at its peak his Aristotelian speculation gives way to an almost mystical, integrative, and intuitive kind of knowledge, but there is no way to escape the preparatory stage required in order to achieve this point. Indeed, one of the most crucial points in which Aquinas departs from Maimonides relates to the place of the philosopher as against the larger framework of his religious community constituted in large part by uneducated believers, concerning their mutual relation to ultimate truths and to human perfection.⁶⁵ In Maimonides's thought this gap leads to a sharp social dichotomy. On the one hand, the philosopher as a moral and political figure can live under such a dualistic condition only as long as he dedicates himself to the fulfillment of a final eschatological vision of redemption through enlightenment. On the other hand, and at the same time, the radical gap cannot be bridged by a revolutionary messianic leap from the present imperfect situation to a utopian reality. It requires an extremely long process throughout which the believer can reach perfection only by being part of a perfect community led by the perfect legislation of a perfect philosopher.

It seems that this conflict between Arab radical rationalism and Dominican synthesis shaped Eckhart's consciousness when he came to deal with similar problems. His epistemology was formulated as an original answer to the main challenge of the monopsychic debate: how to shape an ethical

⁶⁴ Leo Strauss is mostly identified with such a political interpretation of Maimonides's epistemology; see *Philosophie und Gesetz. Beiträge zum Verständnis Maimunis und seiner Vorläufer* (Berlin: 1935); for a recent discussion, see H.T. Kreisel, *Maimonides' Political Thought* (Albany, N.Y.: 1999).

⁶⁵ P. Synave, "La révélation des vérités divines naturelles d'après Saint Thomas d'Aquin," in *Mélanges Mandonnet*, vol. 1, 327–70; reprinted in *Maimonides and St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. J. Dienstag (New York: 1975); A. Wohlman, *Thomas d'Aquin et Maimonide. Un Dialogue exemplaire* (Paris: 1988), 196ff.

epistemology that can provide a uniting ethos for all members of the community. In that sense, the shift from Maimonides to Eckhart is the shift from the idea of the enlightened philosopher-monarch to that of the anarchic intellectual. The Dominican preacher Eckhart believes that he can and must direct his message to a much wider audience than his predecessor did. It was already Adolf Lasson in the mid-19th century who rightly claimed that Eckhart's teaching of immanence and presence leads him to personalize the Averroistic teaching of *nous poietikos*⁶⁶ and that this epistemology is directly connected by him with his social theory. "Eckhart believes that salvation is to be found only in the act of cognition, and salvation belongs to all."⁶⁷

Eckhart's aim, therefore, is to lead his audience not from ignorance to philosophy, but from the ecstatic to the intellectual realm. But this in itself was not enough. In order to develop a popular version of Arab philosophical perfection, not through a prolonged process of scientific education, one needs to find an alternative to the unavoidable rational discursive process of (academic) study. Modern scholarship tends to identify such projects of popularized non-elitistic philosophic redemption as "mysticism." Bernard McGinn has recently suggested that Eckhart's mysticism must be defined primarily as "Mysticism of the Ground," where man is called to realize the immanent divine element within through central activities as detaching, birthing, breaking-through.⁶⁸ The main vehicle through which Eckhart the *Lebemeister* would evoke this kind of action in his audience is linguistic. Eckhart's preaching represents a radical usage of language which, at its peak, transcends and destroys religious language itself. This linguistic aspect of Eckhart's activity is closely related to the above-discussed problem of personal redemption because Eckhart believes in his power to free the souls of his listeners from their boundaries so they can break through to the (inner) realm of the eternal.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Adolf Lasson, *Meister Eckhart der Mystiker; Zur Geschichte der religiösen Spekulation in Deutschland* (Berlin: 1868; repr. Aalen: 1968), 349.

⁶⁷ Adolf Lasson, *Meister Eckhart der Mystiker*, 352: "Nur im Erkennen, meint Eckhart, ist das Heil, und das Heil ist für alle."

⁶⁸ McGinn, *The Mystical Thought*, 132.

⁶⁹ Eckhart's confrontation with the church authorities of his time has to do mainly with his insistence on preaching complicated metaphysical and theological matters to the uninstructed "laici." As has been widely recognized in modern scholarship, this is also the important motive suggested in the papal bull, i.e. the claim that Eckhart "presented many things as dogma that were designed to cloud the true faith in the hearts of many, *things which he put forth especially before the uneducated crowd in his sermons and that he also admitted into his writings.*" See Denifle, "Acten," 636: "dogmatizavit multa fidem veram

A lot has been said in the last generation about the mystical dimensions in Maimonides's thought and about its relation to "mysticism," mainly in reference to the Jewish Kabbalah, but also to Muslim Sufi speculations.⁷⁰ One major strategy of such speculations concerning Maimonides's mysticism is to place emphasis on the more "devotional" chapters of the Guide, especially the last chapters, while reading them through the epistemological schema provided in the famous description of the analogy between human and divine intellect in Guide 1:68. The fact that Eckhart completely ignores all these chapters in favor of the more technical discussion of the relevant topics seems to support the basic intuition which underlies my analysis, that is, it is neither the hagiographic tradition connected with Maimonides in Jewish tradition nor the explicit mystical dimensions of his writings that attracts Eckhart. It is, rather, Eckhart the university teacher who turns to Maimonides as a fresh, theoretical authority in order to construct a theoretical structure both solid in its Aristotelian elements and yet distinct in its assumption concerning the overall structure of human knowledge.

It is this unique political and social structure of knowledge that has led Eckhart to choose Maimonides as his preferred representative of the

in cordibus multorum obnubilantia, que docuit quammaxime coram vulgo simplici in suis predicationibus, que etiam redegit in scriptis," English translation in *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defence*, translation and introduction E. Colledge and B. McGinn (Mahwah, N.J.: 1981), 77. Also, Nicolas of Cusa in his *Apologia Doctae ignorantiae*, while justifying some of Eckhart's main metaphysical theses, clearly distances himself from this aspect of Eckhart's teaching: "The teacher . . . praised Eckhart's genius and ardor. Yet, he wished that his books would be removed from public places; for the people are not suited for [the statements] which Eckhart often intersperses, contrary to the custom of the other teachers." See Nicolas of Cusa, *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae*, ed. R. Klibanski, Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia (Leipzig: 1932), 24–25, 12. [See Elizabeth Brient's chapter in the present volume.] Eckhart himself, already some ten years before the inquisitorial process against him, had openly and programmatically declared in the ending paragraph of his *Book on Divine Consolation (Liber Benedictus)*: "And we shall be told that one ought not to talk about or write such teachings to the unlearned. But to this I say that if no one would be allowed to teach people who have not been taught, no one will ever be taught, and no one will ever be able to teach and write. It is exactly therefore that one teach the untaught, so that they may be changed from uninstructed into instructed;" see Eckhart, *Liber Benedictus I*: Daz Buoch der goetlichen Troestung, in N. Largier, *Meister Eckharts Werke*, II, 312.

⁷⁰ M. Idel, "Maimonides and Kabbalah," in *Studies in Maimonides*, ed. Isidor Twersky (Cambridge, Mass.: 1990), 31–81; Idel, *Maïmonide et la mystique juive* (Paris: 1991); David R. Blumenthal, *Philosophic Mysticism, Studies in Rational Religion* (Ramat Gan: 2006); Blumenthal, "Maimonides Philosophic Mysticism," in *Maimonides and Mysticism*, ed. Avraham Elqayam and Dov Schwartz, *Daat. A Journal of Jewish Philosophy and Kabbalah* 64–66 (Ramat Gan: 2009), V–XXVI.

Arabic school of Aristotelian philosophy. On the metaphysical level, Maimonides offers the most extreme Arabic (and Jewish) version of negative theology. On the hermeneutical level Maimonides translates this metaphysics into a systematic formulation of philosophy as true interpretation of divine revelation.

The mytho-historical Sinai-revelation was converted in Maimonides into a transhistorical philosophic enterprise in the same way as the Incarnation was converted in Eckhart's thought into an individual vocation. On the eve of a new epoch in European history, such converted narrative was taken not as a substitute to the old tradition but as a new key to decipher its deepest meaning. It was Eckhart's reading in the great work of his Jewish predecessor that finally enabled him to fulfill his early ambitious task: to let Aristotle, Moses, and Christ preach the same gospel.

ECKHART AND THE WORLD OF WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE "FREE SPIRIT" AND MARGUERITE PORETE

Lydia Wegener

1. ECKHART AND THE WORLD OF WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY: A CRITICAL APPROACH

1.1 *Defining the Topic*

Approaching the "world of women's spirituality" means approaching an extremely rich and colorful literary and cultural cosmos including the elaborated writings of the 12th-century Benedictine Hildegard of Bingen, as well as the visions of the 15th-century nun of the Order of St Clare, Ursula Haider. In the following, I will confine myself to some observations concerning two specific traditions within this "world" that modern research has closely linked with Meister Eckhart. But though both traditions definitely belong to the intellectual milieu of the Meister, the question of whether he was *personally* involved in them has to be debated. We will examine this issue below.

The first tradition rooted in the 13th century consists of the religious texts of so-called Beguines—women who had decided to devote their life entirely to God without being members of an approved order.¹ Among them, Hadewijch of Brabant, Mechthild of Magdeburg, and Marguerite Porete² are especially renowned for their sophisticated writings. For reasons explained below I will here concentrate on Marguerite. The other literary tradition develops among Dominican nuns in the first half of the 14th century. These monastic women make use of a specific hagiographic

¹ See Herbert Grundmann, *Religiöse Bewegungen im Mittelalter. Untersuchungen über die geschichtlichen Zusammenhänge zwischen der Ketzerei, den Bettelorden und der religiösen Frauenbewegung im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert und über die geschichtlichen Grundlagen der deutschen Mystik. Anhang: neue Beiträge zur Geschichte der religiösen Bewegungen im Mittelalter*, 4th ed. (Darmstadt: 1977). See esp. Chapter 6: "Die Beginen im 13. Jahrhundert," 319–54. See also Irene Leicht, *Marguerite Porete—eine fromme Intellektuelle und die Inquisition*, (Freiburger theologische Studien) 163 (Freiburg: 1999), esp. 92–107.

² For an introduction to Hadewijch and Mechthild see Kurt Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, 2 (Munich: 1993), 158–232 (Hadewijch) and 245–95 (Mechthild). We will deal with Marguerite extensively below (see section 2).

genre—so-called *vitae*—to present the moral and spiritual excellence of deceased nuns of their own convent. Characteristically, the texts focus on the nuns' intimate relationship with God—particularly with the person of the Son, Jesus Christ—and they pay special attention to extreme physical experiences like illness, self-castigation, and visions. These *vitae* could either be very short (quite often only a few lines) and are collected in so-called “sister-books”³ or assume the form of long biographies, concentrating on just one exemplary nun (e.g. the “Revelations” of Margaretha Ebner).⁴

Less attention is paid to the mystical poetry written and preserved by Dominican nuns.⁵ But these seemingly unpretentious rhymes also deserve a closer look; first, because they are documents of Eckhart's reception within the female branch of the order, and secondly because they give us a valuable insight into the circulation of daring ideas even within thoroughly orthodox contexts.⁶

³ For an introduction see Gertrud Jaron Lewis, *By Women, for Women, about Women. The Sister-Books of Fourteenth-Century Germany*, (Studies and Texts) 125 (Toronto: 1996). Two very short surveys are provided by Alois Maria Haas, namely: “Schreibweisen der Frauenmystik,” in *Deutsche Literatur. Eine Sozialgeschichte. Aus der Mündlichkeit in die Schriftlichkeit: Höfische und andere Literatur*, ed. Ursula Liebertz-Grün, 1 (Reinbek bei Hamburg: 1986), 357–66; “Nonnenviten,” in Alois Maria Haas, *Mystik im Kontext* (Munich: 2004), 219–25. As far as we know, “sister-books” were written in nine convents (Adelhausen, Unterlinden, Töss, Oetenbach, Engelthal, Kirchberg, Weiler, St Katharinenthal, Ulm), almost exclusively in Middle High German (the only exception is the “Vitae sororum” from Unterlinden). The question of how many texts of this literary genre were lost remains open. Unfortunately, most of the extant works are only available in very old editions. An exception is Ruth Mayer, *Das “St. Katharinentaler Schwesternbuch,”* Untersuchung, Edition, Kommentar, (MTU) 104 (Tübingen: 1995).

⁴ Accessible only in the old edition by Philipp Strauch, *Margaretha Ebner und Heinrich von Nördlingen. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der deutschen Mystik* (Freiburg: 1882). For a modern approach to Margaretha's “Revelations” that stresses their literary character as a specific form of hagiography, see Susanne Bürkle, “Die Offenbarungen der Margareta Ebner. Rhetorik der Weiblichkeit und der autobiographische Pakt,” in *Weibliche Rede—Rhetorik der Weiblichkeit. Studien zum Verhältnis von Rhetorik und Geschlechterdifferenz*, ed. Doerte Bischoff and Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf, Rombach Wissenschaften, Reihe Litterae 93 (Freiburg: 2003), 79–102.

⁵ See Kurt Ruh, “Mystische Spekulation in Reimversen des 14. Jahrhunderts,” in Ruh, *Kleine Schriften 2* (Berlin: 1984), 184–211.

⁶ See below, section 3.

1.2 *Eckhart as Opponent of Women's Spirituality?* *Questioning Two Historiographical Concepts*

1.2.1 *Eckhart, the Dominican Nuns, and "Affective Mysticism"*

Reading the exemplary *vitae* of Dominican nuns confronts us with a specific kind of spirituality that is both abhorrent and fascinating at the same time. It consists in an extreme form of *imitatio Christi* understood as physical suffering—which is either caused by self-castigation or by various illnesses sent by God as tokens of his love. The female protagonists are rewarded for the bitterness of their life by an immediate and affective relationship towards God, and especially to Jesus Christ whom they see and with whom they even interact in corporal and imaginary visions—preferably either as child or as the Christ of the Passion.⁷

Whereas early research on these *vitae* came to the seemingly natural conclusion that enclosure within Dominican convents obviously led to typically female forms of madness and hysteria,⁸ the last decades have put forward the *literary* character of the texts, which has to be recognized in order to judge them in a proper way.⁹ Nowadays, almost all scholars share

⁷ For illustration, just two examples from the "St Katharinentaler Schwesternbuch" (see above, note 3). Vita no. 2 (97): "Ein swester dú hiess swester Adelheit von Spiegelberg, die was in dem kor an ir gebett. Ains tages do der couent vnsern herren hat empfangen, do sach si vnsern herren als er ein kindli was vnd hat grossen trost mit dem kindlin..." ["One sister was called sister Adelheit of Spiegelberg who used to pray in the choir. One day when the convent had received our Lord, she saw our Lord in the guise of a little child and she had much pleasure with the child..."] [My translation]; Vita no. 13 (102): "Ein swester dú hiess swester Mehthilt von Lobegg. Dú bettet ein gebett vnsern herren marter an ir gestrachten venie für sich selber. Vnd do si vff stuond von der venie, do sach si vnsern herren vor ir stan mit den fünff zaichen. Do wolt sie im zuo sinen fuessen sin gefallen. Do sach si sin nit me." ["One sister was called sister Mehthilt of Lobegg. She said for herself a prayer about the passion of our Lord while lying stretched out on the ground. And when she got up again, she saw our Lord standing before her with his five wounds. But when she wanted to fall down before his feet, she did not see him anymore."] [My translation].

⁸ See, e.g. the psychoanalytical approach to Margaretha Ebner's "Revelations" by Oskar Pfister, "Hysterie und Mystik bei Margaretha Ebner (1291–1351)," *Zentralblatt für Psychoanalyse* 1, 10/12 (1911), 468–85.

⁹ A turning point is marked by Siegfried Ringer's postulation: "Grundsätzlich ist vom Literaturcharakter des Werks auszugehen" ["Without any exception, we must pay attention to the literary character of the texts"]. See Siegfried Ringer, "Gnadenviten aus süd-deutschen Frauenklöstern des 14. Jahrhunderts—Vitenschreibung als mystische Lehre," in *Minnichlichiu gotes erkennenisse: Studien zur frühen abendländischen Mystiktradition*, ed. Dietrich Schmidtke, *Mystik in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Abt. 1, Christliche Mystik* 7 (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: 1990), 89–104.

the opinion that the texts do not directly reflect historical realities—instead, they are developing certain hagiographical *topoi* within the narrative frame of a convent. And it is also generally agreed that they are not spontaneous confessions of supernatural experiences written down by ecstatic nuns—instead, they are intended to fulfill genuine functions of monastic historiography¹⁰ and were shaped, rewritten, and transmitted in very complicated ways.¹¹ In spite of this consent, the question of whether or not the *vitae* are somehow indicative of spiritual life among the Dominican nuns still leaves room for discussion. Two influential positions are represented by Ursula Peters and Otto Langer. Whereas Peters stresses the purely literal character of the *vitae*, which gives us no chance to catch at least a glimpse of the reality behind them,¹² Langer insists that the texts reflect the spirituality of (Dominican) nuns, though broken by the conventions of the literary genre.¹³ Referring to the considerations of Heinrich Seuse Denifle, Herbert Grundmann, and Kurt Ruh, Langer takes it for granted that there was a close connection between mystical spirituality in the Dominican convents and the preaching of Dominican friars within these convents.¹⁴ In this context, Langer stresses the importance of Meister Eckhart. Strictly analyzing his sermons against the background of the *vitae*, especially the “sister-books,” leads Langer to the conclusion that Eckhart’s sophisticated teaching about the birth of God in the hidden

¹⁰ On this, see Susanne Bürkle’s profound study *Literatur im Kloster. Historische Funktion und rhetorische Legitimation frauenmystischer Texte des 14. Jahrhunderts*, (Bibliotheca Germanica) 38 (Tübingen: 1999).

¹¹ Though quite old, one of the best studies concerning this crucial aspect remains Klaus Grubmüller, “Die Viten der Schwestern von Töss und Elsbeth Stagel (Überlieferung und literarische Einheit),” *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 98 (1969), 171–204.

¹² See her *Religiöse Erfahrung als literarisches Faktum. Zur Vorgeschichte und Genese frauenmystischer Texte des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts*, (Hermaea) NS 56 (Tübingen: 1988). Susanne Bürkle’s study (see above, note 10) is based on Peters’s considerations.

¹³ Langer has developed his position in one extensive study and several articles. I only mention the study and two further contributions: Otto Langer, *Mystische Erfahrung und spirituelle Theologie. Zu Meister Eckharts Auseinandersetzung mit der Frauenfrömmigkeit seiner Zeit*, (MTU) 91 (Munich: 1987); Langer, “Enteignete Existenz und mystische Erfahrung. Zu Meister Eckharts Auseinandersetzung mit der Frauenmystik seiner Zeit,” in *Sô predigent eteliche. Beiträge zur deutschen und niederländischen Predigt im Mittelalter*, ed. Kurt Otto Seidel, Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik 378 (Göppingen: 1982), 49–96; Langer, “Meister Eckhart und sein Publikum am Oberrhein. Zur Anwendung rezeptionstheoretischer Ansätze in der Meister-Eckhart-Forschung,” in *Meister Eckhart: Lebensstationen—Redesituationen*, ed. Klaus Jacobi, Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens, NS 7 (Berlin: 1997), 175–92.

¹⁴ See Langer, *Mystische Erfahrung* (see above, note 13), 9–12, 18.

ground of the soul is directed against the religious practices of Dominican nuns.¹⁵

But though we know for sure that Eckhart preached before monastic women,¹⁶ Langer's thesis raises several doubts:

1. It is based on the assumption that Eckhart's main task was the *cura monialium* (i.e. spiritual guidance for monastic women). As recent research has shown, this can neither be sufficiently proved from historical documents,¹⁷ nor is it probable given Eckhart's high social position within the strictly hierarchical structure of the Dominican order. The *cura monialium* was organized and delegated by the priors of the monasteries who were responsible for the convents within their *termini praedicationis* and it was practiced either by preachers thought fit for this task—not necessarily with a very high education—or even by chaplains.¹⁸
2. The sermons held before Dominican nuns were not necessarily exclusively addressed to them. They could also have been directed to a lay public that had access to the respective church. Therefore, it seems questionable to claim that the Dominican sermons—and especially those of Eckhart—reacted to a specifically female spirituality, which was restricted to the clandestine atmosphere of a convent.¹⁹

¹⁵ See Langer's studies quoted above, note 13.

¹⁶ By an analysis of references in several sermons, Josef Quint was able to prove that Pr. 12 and 15 were held at the Benedictine convent in Cologne, St Machabaeorum, and that Pr. 22 was held at the Cistercian convent in Cologne, called "Mariengarten." See DW I, 372–73. The references are also discussed by Niklaus Largier in *Meister Eckhart. Werke I*, (Bibliothek des Mittelalters) 20 (Frankfurt am Main: 1993), 738–39. Interestingly enough, we have no *immediate* proof that Eckhart also preached in Dominican convents. We can only assume this by the fact that he was a Dominican himself, by some mystical poems testifying to his reception within the convents (see section 3), and by three remarks in the "sister-books" (one in the "Oetenbacher Schwesternbuch," and two in the "St Katharinentaler Schwesternbuch;" see Bürkle, *Literatur im Kloster* [see above, note 10], 60) where the Meister has become a literary figure within the *vitae*.

¹⁷ See Loris Sturlese, "Meister Eckhart und die *cura monialium*: Kritische Anmerkungen zu einem forschungsgeschichtlichen Mythos," in *Meister Eckharts Straßburger Jahrzehnt*, ed. Andrés Quero-Sánchez and Georg Steer, Meister-Eckhart-Jahrbuch 2 (Stuttgart: 2008), 1–16. For a restatement of Langer's thesis that Eckhart primarily lectured to Dominican nuns, see Milem's chapter in the present volume.

¹⁸ See Bürkle, *Literatur im Kloster* (see above, note 10), esp. 60–64, 72–77, 91–93. See also Marie-Luise Ehrenscheidtner, *Die Bildung der Dominikanerinnen in Süddeutschland vom 13. bis 15. Jahrhundert*, (Contubernium) 60 (Stuttgart: 2004), esp. 240–41, 244–45.

¹⁹ See Bürkle, *Literatur im Kloster* (see above, note 10), esp. 85, 88–89. See also Dagmar Gottschall, "Nikolaus von Straßburg, Meister Eckhart und die *cura monialium*," in *Meister*

3. We know the sermons only in their written form. Thus, it remains an open question if the original sermon—i.e. the spoken word—was directed to nuns, even if it is transmitted to us in manuscripts that obviously belonged to Dominican convents.²⁰
4. Langer's thesis is at least implicitly based on a supposed opposition between "male" and "female" spirituality resulting from the different natural constitution of men and women.²¹

The dichotomy of an "intellectual" male and an "affective" female mystical spirituality has been justly criticized by recent research.²²

Nevertheless, there are still some open questions that deserve deeper scrutiny. First, if Langer's approach is really wrong, do we have to analyze Eckhart's sermons without paying attention to the Dominican *vitae* and the spirituality presented in them? Secondly, we must ask why the protagonists of the *vitae* are mainly women if there is no "biological" reason for their inclination towards visions of Christ and their affection for his suffering. Thirdly, we should analyze how Eckhart's critical position towards ecstatic experiences was judged within the Dominican order. Are there any indications that his sermons were understood as being directed against women's spirituality?

Though answering these questions would go beyond the scope of this contribution, some preliminary remarks might be allowed:

Eckharts Straßburger Jahrzehnt (see above, note 17), 95–118. See Millem's chapter above for the older viewpoint.

²⁰ See Bürkle, *Literatur im Kloster* (see above, note 10), 89.

²¹ The assumption that the natural constitution of women—i.e. the dominance of emotions over reason—predestines them for an affective spirituality including suffering and visions remained alive until the 20th century. Kurt Ruh, for example, agrees explicitly with the 13th [!]-century writer Lamprecht of Regensburg in this explanation. See Kurt Ruh, "Beginenmystik. Hadewijch, Mechthild von Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete," in Ruh, *Kleine Schriften 2* (Berlin: 1984), 237–49, see 238. See also Walter Blank, "Umsetzung der Mystik in den Frauenklöstern," in *Mystik am Oberrhein und in benachbarten Gebieten*, ed. Hans H. Hofstätter (Freiburg: 1978), 25–36, see 35; Haas, "Nonnenviten" (see above, note 3), 222, esp. note 13.

²² See Susanne Bürkle, "Weibliche Spiritualität und imaginierte Weiblichkeit. Deutungsmuster und -perspektiven frauenmystischer Literatur im Blick auf die Thesen Caroline Walker Bynums," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 113 (1994), 116–43, esp. 116–17; Theresia Heimerl, *Frauenmystik—Männermystik? Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede in der Darstellung von Gottes- und Menschenbild bei Meister Eckhart, Heinrich Seuse, Marguerite Porete und Mechthild von Magdeburg* (Mystik und Mediävistik) 1 (Graz: 1998).

1. Unquestionably, Eckhart opposes a kind of spirituality which he considers to be wrong because it is concentrated on ascetic practices (*üebunge*) and experiences of inner sweetness but misses true union with God.²³ Without any reference to the living conditions of his listeners these teachings would be utterly pointless. But it is quite astonishing that modern research has applied Eckhart's warnings almost exclusively to women, though he never indicates such a gender-restricted point of view. His early "Rede der underscheidunge" ("Counsels on Discernment"), where he develops his famous doctrine of detachment (*gelassenheit*) for the very first time and denounces all special experiences of God's grace as a subtle kind of egoism,²⁴ are even explicitly addressed to a male audience.²⁵ In addition, various other literary texts and documents of the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries demonstrate quite clearly that the extreme form of *imitatio Christi* depicted in the "sister-books" was not considered a female prerogative by Eckhart's contemporaries. Apart from several 14th-century *vitae* whose male protagonists—the "Servant of Eternal Wisdom" (usually identified with Heinrich Seuse),²⁶ the chaplain Friedrich

²³ See the quotation in note 24.

²⁴ See, e.g. DW V, 191.6–192.4: "Die menschen sprechent: 'eyâ, herre, ich wölte gerne, daz mir alsô wol mit gote wære und alsô vil andâht hæte und vride mit gote, als ander liute hânt, und wölte, daz mir alsô wære oder ich alsô arm sî,' oder: 'mir enwirt niemer reht, ich ensî denne dâ oder dâ und tuo sus oder sô, ich muoz in ellende sîn oder in einer klûsen oder in einem klôster.' In der wârheit, diz bist dû allez selber und anders niht zemâle. Ez ist eigener wille, aleine enweist dû es niht oder endünket dich es niht..." ["People say: 'O Lord, how much I wish that I stood as well with God, that I had as much devotion and peace in God as others have, I wish that it were so with me!' Or, 'I should like to be poor,' or else, 'Things will never go right for me till I am in this place or that, or till I act one way or another. I must go and live in a strange land, or in a hermitage, or in a cloister.' In fact, this is all about yourself, and nothing else at all. This is just self-will, only you do not know it or it does not seem so to you."] [Translation by Edmund Colledge in *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, ed. Bernard McGinn and Edmund Colledge (Mahwah, N.J.: 1981), 249]. See also Eckhart's famous distinction between "wesen der minne" ["being of love"] and "werk" or "ûzbruch der minne" ["deeds" or "manifestation of love"]. Whereas the former is hidden in the ground of the soul and means true union with God, the latter expresses itself as "innicheit und andâht und jubilieren" ["inwardness and devotion and jubilation"]. This kind of affective spirituality is not esteemed very highly by Eckhart; it is even worse than a very simple work of love, such as supplying a poor man with a bit of soup. See DW V, 219.3–221.8.

²⁵ Namely, to the novices of the Dominican monastery in Erfurt. See DW V, 185 (the title to the "Counsels on Discernment").

²⁶ "Seuses Leben," in Heinrich Seuse, *Deutsche Schriften*, ed. Karl Bihlmeyer (Stuttgart: 1907; repr. Frankfurt am Main: 1961), 7–195. The authorship is debated. See Stephanie Altrock and Hans-Joachim Ziegeler, "Vom *diener der ewigen wisheit* zum Autor Heinrich Seuse. Autorschaft und Medienwandel in den illustrierten Handschriften und Drucken

Sunder,²⁷ and the “Friend of God” Rulman Merswin²⁸—cultivate an affective spirituality filled with corporeal and imaginative visions as the only way of approaching God, some negative voices can be heard: for example, the Franciscan David of Augsburg (d. 1272) warns his readers in “De septem processibus religiosorum” against having trust in visions.²⁹ And Humbertus de Romanis (d. 1277), fifth general of the Dominican order, reminds male novices (*novitii*) in his *Institutiones de officiis ordinis* that visions and miracles do not contribute anything to their salvation.³⁰ The priest Henry of Langenstein (d. 1397) claims in his treatise *De discretione spirituum*—which was originally addressed to monks³¹—a close connection between pride, self-castigation, and *phantasticae visiones*,³² and even the Dominican reformer Johannes Meyer (d. 1485), who is mainly discussing women’s spirituality,³³ advises in his *Buch der Reformacio Predigerordens* (“Book of the Reformation of the Dominican Order”) that the “iungen und nüwen bruder und swöstren” (“the young and new brothers and sisters”) should be forbidden to castigate themselves in an extreme way because it would disturb community life.³⁴ On the other hand, self-castigation can definitely be recommended by male members of the order, and also by those active in the *cura monialium*. Thus, Venturio of Bergamo not only gives advice to Dominican nuns on how to physically punish themselves, but also sends them scourges as a present.³⁵

So it seems that different concepts of *imitatio Christi* were debated in Eckhart’s times and that he had a very clear and philosophically founded

von Heinrich Seuses ‘Exemplar,’ in *Text und Kultur: mittelalterliche Literatur 1150–1450*, ed. Ursula Peters, Germanistische-Symposien-Berichtsbände 23 (Stuttgart: 2003), 150–81.

²⁷ “Gnaden-Leben des Friedrich Sunder, Klosterkaplan zu Engelthal,” ed. Siegfried Ringler, in Ringler, *Viten- und Offenbarungsliteratur in Frauenklöstern des Mittelalters*, MTU 720 (Munich: 1980), 391–444.

²⁸ His works—published under his own name and under the pseudonym “Gottesfreund vom Oberland”—are available in several old editions. See Georg Steer, “Merswin, Rulman,” *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon*, 2nd ed., vol. 6 (1987), 420–42.

²⁹ See Alois Maria Haas, *Gottleiden—Gottlieben. Zur volkssprachlichen Mystik im Mittelalter* (Frankfurt am Main: 1989), 387–88 (note 125). The form “religiosorum” in the title suggests that David primarily addresses a male audience.

³⁰ See Ehrenschtendtner, *Die Bildung* (see above, note 18), 111, note 223.

³¹ See Thomas Hohmann and Georg Kreuzer, “Heinrich von Langenstein,” *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon*, 2nd ed., vol. 3 (1981), 763–73, see 768.

³² Heinrichs von Langenstein, ‘*Unterscheidung der Geister*’ lateinisch und deutsch, ed. Thomas Hohmann, MTU 63 (Zürich: 1977), 72, ll. 41–49.

³³ See further below.

³⁴ Johannes Meyer, *Buch der Reformacio Predigerordens*, ed. Benedictus Maria Reichert (Leipzig: 1909), 95.

³⁵ See Ehrenschtendtner, *Die Bildung* (see above, note 18), 259.

position within these discussions. However, he does not oppose an exclusively female spirituality, but an extreme form of affective mysticism that was otherwise recommended by some preachers and which was practiced by some men *and* women.

2. The predominance of female protagonists in the *vitae* is surely influenced by the ideal of the *sancta moderna* that was inaugurated by Jacques de Vitry in his "Life" of Marie d'Oignies and which flourished in the 14th century.³⁶ There may also be working anthropological theories that ascribe to women a particularly high susceptibility to visions and ecstatic experiences due to their comparatively weak physical and mental constitution.³⁷ Interestingly enough, those gender concepts are absolutely irrelevant to Meister Eckhart. His doctrine of a rigid internalization, which is focused on the uncreated ground of the soul, transgresses such categories. Eckhart is not interested in the division of human beings into men and women; he is interested in human nature as such because it guarantees the identity with Christ incarnate.³⁸ Therefore, Eckhart's teaching negates any discussion about supposedly female forms of spirituality.

3. There is no evidence that Eckhart's writings were perceived by his contemporaries as pamphlets against women's spirituality. Although it is true that Dominican reformers, especially those of the 15th century, were increasingly shaping a concept of women's spirituality which turned the former ideal of the *sancta moderna* into its opposite—by stressing

³⁶ See Bürkle, "Weibliche Spiritualität" (see above, note 22), esp. 134–38.

³⁷ See Nancy Caciola, "Mystics, Demoniacs, and the Physiology of Spirit Possession in Medieval Europe," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, 1 (2000), 268–306, esp. 289, 293–94, 296.

³⁸ See, e.g. Pr. 24 (DW I, 420.4–11): "Dâ wart menschlich natûre got, wan er menschliche natûre blôz und keinen menschen an sich nam. Dar umbe, wilt dû der selbe Krist sîn und got sîn, sô ganc alles des abe, daz daz êwige wort an sich niht ennam. Daz êwige wort nam keinen menschen an sich; dar umbe ganc abe, swaz menschen an dir sî und swaz dû sîst, und nim dich nâch menschlicher natûre blôz, sô bist dû daz selbe an dem êwigen worte, daz menschlich natûre an im ist. Wan dîn menschliche natûre und diu sîne enhât keinen underscheit: si ist ein, wan, swaz si ist in Kristô, daz ist si in dir." ["At this point human nature became God because he took on human nature and not a human being. Therefore, if you want to be this same Christ and God, abandon all of that which the eternal Word did not assume. The eternal Word did not assume a man. Therefore, leave whatever is a man in you and whatever you are, and take yourself purely according to human nature. Then you are the same in the eternal Word as human nature is in him; for your human nature and his are without difference. It is one, and whatever it is in Christ, that it also is in you"] [Translation by Frank Tobin in *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, ed. Bernard McGinn (Mahwah, N.J.: 1986), 286].

women's susceptibility to demonic visions and their natural inability to distinguish between heavenly and hellish appearances³⁹—this change does not go back to Meister Eckhart. Instead, it combines the tradition of *discretio spirituum* (i.e. the ability to discern “good” from “bad” spirits) with an increased misogyny and a growing fear of the devil's ambitions to conquer the world.

Nevertheless, the tradition of affective mysticism remained alive. The best example to demonstrate this coexistence of old and new concepts of spirituality is probably the 15th-century Dominican reformer Johannes Meyer, whose veneration of Meister Eckhart as “homo doctus et sanctus” is well known.⁴⁰ Independently of this high regard, Meyer is the dominant editor of 14th-century sister-books⁴¹ propagating exactly the kind of *imitatio Christi* that Eckhart rejects. In his *Buch der Reformacio Predigerordens* Meyer even writes such *vitae* of exemplary nuns himself.⁴² But whether he is publishing older mystical literature or imitating its style in his own works, he never forgets to mention that the devil is able to disguise himself as an angel of light⁴³ and that women are especially in danger of falling into his trap.⁴⁴

³⁹ See Ulla Williams and Werner Williams-Krapp, “Eine Warnung an alle, *dy sych etwaz duncken*. Der ‘Sendbrief vom Betrug teuflischer Erscheinungen’ (mit einer Edition),” in *Forschungen zur deutschen Literatur des Spätmittelalters, Festschrift für Johannes Janota*, ed. Horst Brunner and Werner Williams-Krapp (Tübingen: 2003), 167–89; Werner Williams-Krapp, “‘Dise ding sint dennoch nit ware zeichen der heiligkeit.’ Zur Bewertung mystischer Erfahrungen im 15. Jahrhundert,” *LiLi. Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 20, 80 (1990), 61–71; Williams-Krapp, “Frauenmystik und Ordensreform im 15. Jahrhundert,” in *Literarische Interessenbildung im Mittelalter*, ed. Joachim Heinze, Germanistische-Symposien-Berichtsbände 14 (Stuttgart: 1993), 301–13.

⁴⁰ See, e.g. Loris Sturlese, “Meister Eckharts Weiterwirken. Versuch einer Bilanz,” in *Eckardus Theutonicus, homo doctus et sanctus. Nachweise und Berichte zum Prozeß gegen Meister Eckhart*, ed. Heinrich Stirnimann (together with Ruedi Imbach), *Dokimion* 11 (Fribourg: 1992), 169–83, esp. 169, 170–71, 182.

⁴¹ See Ruth Mayer, *Das “St. Katharinentaler Schwesternbuch”* (see above, note 3), 66–68.

⁴² The third book of Meyer's *Buch der Reformacio der Predigerordens* includes 19 *vitae* of exemplary nuns, living in the observant convent of Schönensteinbach. See Johannes Meyer, *Buch der Reformacio Predigerordens* (see above, note 34), 54–106.

⁴³ 2 Cor. 11:14.

⁴⁴ For example, in his preface to the “sister-book” of St Katharinental, Meyer suggests that some of the visions depicted there might be of hellish origin and warns his female readers (i.e. reformed nuns) to judge them carefully. See Ruth Mayer, *Das “St. Katharinentaler Schwesternbuch”* (see above, note 3), 140–41. And Meyer's own *vitae* in his “*Buch der Reformacio Predigerordens*” are accompanied by a treatise called “An vermanliche warnung, woby man bekenen sol, ob ains guoten menschen hailigkait gerecht sy und sin gesicht und visionen warhafftig” [“An exhortation how to decide if the holiness of a good

1.2.2 *Eckhart, Beguine Mysticism, and the "Free Spirit"*

Apart from Eckhart's supposed confrontation with women's spirituality within his own order, another successful historiographical concept pointing in a similar direction is his encounter with the so-called "Heresy of the Free Spirit." Although not rooted within the female branch of the Dominican order, this unorthodox movement seems to be closely linked with women's spirituality as well. At least, this has been an influential thesis of Herbert Grundmann, who discovered the roots of the "Free Spirit" within the religious movement of women. Admittedly, it did not develop among those women who found access to the approved orders—which means to a controlled life with strict rules—but among those who were forced to remain outside the convents and who thus became extremely susceptible to heretical ideas.⁴⁵ Therefore, Grundmann identifies the "Heretics of the Free Spirit" primarily with the Beguines.⁴⁶

In order to characterize the specific spirituality of these women, Kurt Ruh introduced the term "beguine mysticism."⁴⁷ As its dominant representative he regards the French Beguine Marguerite Porete as an important member of the Free Spirit.⁴⁸ In spite of all social and literary differences, Ruh claims a close affinity between Marguerite's famous treatise—the "Mirouer des simples ames" ("The Mirror of Simple Souls")—and the writings

person is just and if her apparitions and visions are true"]. See Johannes Meyer, *Buch der Reformacio Predigerordens* (see above, note 34), 57–61.

⁴⁵ See Grundmann, *Religiöse Bewegungen* (see above, note 1), esp. 402.

⁴⁶ See the chapter "Deutsche Mystik, Beginentum und Ketzerei des 'Freien Geistes,'" in Grundmann, *Religiöse Bewegungen* (see above, note 1), 524–38. Though the identification of semi-religious women and adherents of the "Free Spirit" was criticized in the decades following Grundmann's pioneering study, it was never eliminated. See, e.g. Irmgard Kampmann, "Eckharts Predigten und die Verurteilung freigeistiger Beginen und Begarden," in *Meister Eckharts Straßburger Jahrzehnt* (see above, note 17), 119–40.

⁴⁷ Kurt Ruh, "Beginenmystik. Hadewijch, Mechthild von Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete" (see above, note 21).

⁴⁸ Ruh regards both Marguerite and Meister Eckhart as participants of a broad "Free Spirit" movement. See his "Le Mirouer des simples âmes' der Marguerite Porete," in Ruh, *Kleine Schriften* 2 (see above, note 5), 212–36, see 220. The dubious integration of the "Mirouer" into the "Heresy of the Free Spirit" was inaugurated by Romana Guarnieri who published the Beguine's work within an extensive study titled "Il movimento del Libero spirito," *Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà* 4 (1965), 351–708 (edition of the "Mirouer:" 501–708). In spite of his critical attitude towards Guarnieri's contribution, Robert Lerner also regards Marguerite as "one of the most important figures in the history of the heresy of the Free Spirit." See his *The Heresy of the "Free Spirit" in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (London: 1972), 7 (criticism), 71 (quotation).

of Hadewijch and Mechthild of Magdeburg.⁴⁹ Owing to Marguerite's condemnation and her violent death at the stake in 1310, the suspicion is close at hand that the Beguines formed some kind of subversive movement, rejecting the bounds of ecclesiastical and social hierarchies and disseminating heterodox ideas.

Eckhart's confrontation with the Free Spirit is made probable by several historical facts:⁵⁰ in 1311–13 the Thuringian stayed at the Parisian monastery of the Dominican order—only one year after Marguerite's execution on the Place de Grève; his fellow occupant was the General Inquisitor William of Paris, OP, who had been responsible for Marguerite's condemnation and death; while Eckhart was teaching in Paris as professor of theology, the Council of Vienne took place which promulgated the famous decree "*Ad nostrum qui*" with its list of eight heretical sentences ascribed to semi-religious men and women—among them one or even more possibly taken from the *Mirouer*; and returning from Paris, Eckhart was sent to Strasbourg,⁵¹ a stronghold of the Beguine movement.

In agreement with Alois Maria Haas, Ruh assumes that Eckhart—who probably knew Marguerite's *Mirouer*—intended to lead the daring, but spiritually valuable Beguine mysticism back into orthodoxy by providing it with a philosophical and theological foundation.⁵² Of course Ruh must concede that Eckhart was not very successful in his attempts: in the end he fell victim to the same inquisitorial mechanisms as Marguerite.⁵³ Ironically, recent research has even shown that Eckhart's opponents were keen to associate him with heretics of the Free Spirit by diligently searching his

⁴⁹ See his "Le Mirouer des simples âmes' der Marguerite Porete," in Ruh, *Kleine Schriften*, 2 (see above, note 5), 219. What the three Beguines have in common according to Ruh is their strong focus on "Gottesminne" ("Love of God"). See Ruh, "Beginenmystik. Hadewijch, Mechthild von Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete" (see above, note 21), 244.

⁵⁰ For the following information, see Kurt Ruh, "Meister Eckhart und die Spiritualität der Beginen," in Ruh, *Kleine Schriften*, 2 (see above, note 5), 327–36; see also Ruh, *Meister Eckhart. Theologe, Prediger, Mystiker*, 2nd ed. (Munich: 1989), 95–114.

⁵¹ However, recent research has raised severe doubts about Eckhart's continuous stay in Strasbourg, see Walter Senner, "Meister Eckharts Straßburger Ordensauftrag," in *Meister Eckharts Straßburger Jahrzehnt* (see above, note 17), 17–35; see also Senner, Milem and Marler chapters in the present volume.

⁵² See Ruh, "Meister Eckhart und die Spiritualität der Beginen" (see above, note 50), 329–30. Even in present times, Ruh's thesis has kept its fascination. See, e.g. Verena Barthel, "Grenzüberschreitende Mystik. Meister Eckharts *Liber benedictus* als Reflex der gefährlichen Lehre der Marguerite Porète?," in *Deutsch-französische Literaturbeziehungen. Stationen und Aspekte dichterischer Nachbarschaft vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Marcel Krings and Roman Luckscheiter (Würzburg: 2007), 23–38.

⁵³ See Ruh, "Meister Eckhart und die Spiritualität der Beginen" (see above, note 50), 333.

writings for sentences corresponding to their supposed doctrines.⁵⁴ These carefully constructed suspicions remained alive in the different traditions of Eckhart reception. Whereas his defenders were trying to separate his teachings clearly from those of the Free Spirit—most famously Heinrich Seuse in his *Little Book of the Truth*⁵⁵—others were maintaining frankly that Eckhart was a member of the sect.⁵⁶

The historiographical concept of a “Heresy of the Free Spirit” that was represented by the Beguines, and which Eckhart was trying to integrate into orthodoxy before becoming its victim, is surely fascinating. Nevertheless, we must not ignore its inherent problems. Here, they can only be mentioned briefly; but in the following paragraphs some of them will be taken up again.

A first cluster of problems concerns the concept of “Beguine mysticism:”

1. To separate a “Beguine mysticism” from mysticism in general seems questionable insofar as the Beguines did not develop a cultural identity of their own in the 13th century. There were no topics reserved just for Beguines.⁵⁷
2. Beguines in general were not subversive or even heretical at all. The criticisms directed against them—for example by William of Saint-Amour in the middle of the 13th century—primarily dealt with the problem of their status.⁵⁸ And even the harsh suspicions in the late 13th and early 14th centuries, which also include reproaches of heresy, did not lead to the final elimination of the Beguines, but simply to a clearer definition of their rights and duties within society.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ See Martina Wehrli-Johns, “Mystik und Inquisition. Die Dominikaner und die sogenannte Häresie des Freien Geistes,” in *Deutsche Mystik im abendländischen Zusammenhang: neu erschlossene Texte, neue methodische Ansätze, neue theoretische Konzepte*, ed. Walter Haug (Tübingen: 2000), 223–52, see 249–50.

⁵⁵ Heinrich Seuse, *Das Buch der Wahrheit: mittelhochdeutsch—deutsch = Daz buechli der warheit*, ed. Loris Sturlese and Rüdiger Blumrich, Philosophische Bibliothek 458 (Hamburg: 1993).

⁵⁶ Well known is Eckhart’s condemnation by Dutch mystics like Jan van Leuven and Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen. See Ruh, “Mystische Spekulation” (see above, note 5), 195–96. See also the recent study on this theme by Rebert E. Lerner, “New Light on *The Mirror of Simple Souls*,” *Speculum* 85, 1 (January 2010), 91–116; Lerner, “New Light on the Condemnation of Meister Eckhart,” *Speculum* 72, 2 (April 1997), 347–66.

⁵⁷ See Christine Ruhrberg, *Der literarische Körper der Heiligen: Leben und Viten der Christina von Stommeln (1242–1312)*, (Bibliotheca Germanica) 35 (Tübingen: 1995), 171–77.

⁵⁸ See Ruhrberg, *Der literarische Körper* (see above, note 57), 68–69.

⁵⁹ See Peters, *Religiöse Erfahrung* (see above, note 12), 42, 62.

3. For Eckhart's contemporaries, Beguines and Free Spirits were in no way identical. Even the decree "Ad nostrum qui," which is sometimes regarded as the official birth certificate of this heresy,⁶⁰ was not originally directed against the Beguines, but against their male counterpart, the Beghards.⁶¹ And the decree "Cum de quibusdam mulieribus"—also promulgated at the Council of Vienne—which explicitly attacks the status of Beguines, does not refer to the Free Spirits.⁶² The opposite is the case for many 14th-century texts that deal with Free Spirits. They never mention the Beguines.⁶³

Thus, it seems doubtful that Eckhart witnessed the unfolding of an unorthodox "Beguine mysticism" in his immediate surroundings. And even if he was confronted with Marguerite Porete's positions during his stay in Paris, it was a confrontation with a special case of an executed heretic and not with a typical representative of the Beguines.

Even more difficult is a second set of problems which refers to the definition of the Free Spirit as heresy:

1. "Free Spirit" is a kind of collective term that makes it easy to forget that there were different sects with similar names but completely different social backgrounds. For example, the Umbrian "secta spiritus libertatis" must not be confused with the "secta liberi spiritus," which was allegedly located in Strasbourg.⁶⁴
2. What we know about the Free Spirit is transmitted to us by various documents that do not necessarily reflect historical realities. Thus, we neither know if the Free Spirit as a 14th-century movement really existed, nor what its supposed adherents believed and taught.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ See Lerner, *The Heresy* (see above, note 48), 83.

⁶¹ Jacqueline Tarrant, "The Clementine Decrees on the Beguines: Conciliar and Papal Versions," *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 12 (1974), 300–08.

⁶² See Ruhrberg, *Der literarische Körper* (see above, note 57), 75–76.

⁶³ A famous example is the mystical treatise called "Frankfurter" (also known as "Theologia deutsch"). Though explicitly directed against the "Free Spirits" (see its prologue), it never refers to the Beguines. See "Der Franckforter" ("Theologia Deutsch"), ed. Wolfgang von Hinten, (MTU) 78 (Munich: 1982).

⁶⁴ See Wehrli-Johns, "Mystik und Inquisition" (see above, note 54), 232.

⁶⁵ See Wehrli-Johns, "Mystik und Inquisition" (see above, note 54), 224; Leicht, *Marguerite Porete* (see above, note 1), 403.

However, there is a certain set of problematic positions that are ascribed to the Free Spirit⁶⁶ and repeatedly occur within mystical prose texts of the 14th century opposing the sect. I will summarize the most important aspects:

- Free Spirits believe that they have reached an intellectual level where they are either identical with God or with Christ after his resurrection.⁶⁷
- Therefore, Free Spirits claim to have reached utmost happiness in this life, not by God's grace, but by exerting the capacities of their natural intellect.⁶⁸
- Free Spirits believe themselves to be invulnerable because of the perfection of their *homo interior*, which elevates them above any physical and mental suffering.⁶⁹
- Because of their intellectual superiority, Free Spirits do not feel bound to any social or ecclesiastical laws and hierarchies.⁷⁰
- Free Spirits ridicule the offices of the church, the sacraments, and the Holy Scriptures because they believe themselves to be one with God and therefore independent of any mediation between God and man.⁷¹

⁶⁶ The terminology for the heretics is fluctuating. The "Frankfurter" (see above, note 63) calls them the "vngerechten, falschen, freyen geiste" ["unjust, false free spirits"] (prologue, 67, ll. 6–7); in Rulman Merswin's "Bannerbüchlein" ("Little Book of Banners") they are called the "frigen valschen menschen" ["free false persons"] (Rulman Merswin, *Le livre de la bannière du Christ*, ed. Auguste Jundt, in Merswin, *Les amis de Dieu au quatorzième siècle* [Paris: 1879], 393–402, see 393); and in Heinrich Seuse's "Buch der Wahrheit" (see above, note 55) the heresy is represented by "daz namelos wilde" ("the Nameless Wild One," 56, l. 16).

⁶⁷ See "Frankfurter" (see above, note 63), 126, ll. 23–33; 127, ll. 42–50, 58–61; 133, ll. 37–46; "Bannerbüchlein" (see above, note 66), 393–94; "Buch der Wahrheit" (see above, note 55), 62, l. 96. 64, l. 145.

⁶⁸ The literary works dealing with the "Free Spirit" not only warn of overestimating the capacities of the intellect; they also distinguish between "good reason" (which accepts its own limits) and "bad reason" (which considers itself to be godlike). See, e.g. Chapter 47 in Heinrich Seuse's "Leben" (see above, note 26) titled "Underscheid enzwischen ordenlicher und floierender vernünftikeit" ("Difference between proper and flourishing reason").

⁶⁹ See "Frankfurter" (see above, note 63), Chapter 29: "Wie der mensche vor seyнем tode dar czu nicht kommen mag, das er von außßen vnleidlich vnd vnbeweglich werde" ("That it is impossible for human beings to become immune against suffering and emotions before their death"), see also "Bannerbüchlein" (see above, note 66), 393–95.

⁷⁰ See "Frankfurter" (see above, note 63), 105, ll. 31–35; "Bannerbüchlein" (see above, note 66), 394–95.

⁷¹ See the quotations in note 70. This aspect becomes relevant for inquisitorial examinations of the 14th century that construe a connection between adherents of the "Free Spirit," their belief in inner perfection, and their supposed anti-social and anti-ecclesiastical behaviour. See, e.g. the interrogation of the Beghard Johannes Hartmann (1367), published

- Free Spirits despise corporal and imaginative visions, and any kind of *imitatio Christi* that is focused on Christ's human nature and his suffering.⁷²

Returning back to Meister Eckhart and his confrontation with the Free Spirit, a serious doubt remains as to whether there ever was such a confrontation. Though Eckhart criticizes positions that are otherwise ascribed to the Free Spirit,⁷³ he never uses this term to characterize a specific sect; and if he ever associated his criticisms with the Beguines remains a secret not told by the texts. But one may ask: what about the Beguine and "Free Spirit" Marguerite Porete? Even if she is not a typical representative of "Beguine mysticism" as indicated above, does she prove that Eckhart reacted to Free Spirit positions by integrating the daring ideas of the *Mirouer des simples ames* into his own work to provide them with a solid philosophical and theological background? We will deal with this question in the next two sections before returning once again to the Dominican nuns and their attitude towards the Free Spirit.

in *Beiträge zur Sektengeschichte des Mittelalters*, 2, ed. Ignaz von Döllinger (Munich: 1890; repr. Darmstadt: 1968), 384–89.

⁷² See "Frankfurter" (see above, note 63), Chapter 20 (97); "Bannerbüchlein" (see above, note 66), 393–94, 398–99; "Buch der Wahrheit" (see above, note 55), 28, 1, 35, 30, 1, 57.

⁷³ See Pr. 104, 583.198–584.209 where Eckhart criticizes "those people" who believe themselves to be elevated above acts of virtue due to their everlasting contemplation. It is important to note that Eckhart's own spiritual concept of internalization does not mean a regress from the world. Instead, the birth of God within the ground of the soul extends to the *homo exterior* and leads to an active life which is rooted in contemplation. See especially Pr. 102 and Pr. 104. Due to the lack of evidence, I do not share the opinion that Eckhart preached against the "Free Spirits," even though this is a popular historiographical concept. See Walter Senner, "Meister Eckhart in Köln," in *Meister Eckhart: Lebenssituationen—Redesituationen* (see above, note 13), 207–37; Senner, "Rhineland Dominicans, Meister Eckhart and the Sect of the Free Spirit," in *The Vocation of Service to God and Neighbour. Essays on the Interests, Involvements and Problems of Religious Communities and their Members in Medieval Society*, ed. Joan Greatrex (Turnhout: 1998), 121–33; Kampmann, "Eckharts Predigten" (see above, note 46); Marie-Anne Vannier, "Die Gottesgeburt in der Seele in Eckharts Straßburger Predigten," in *Meister Eckharts Straßburger Jahrzehnt* (see above, note 17), 299–310 (for a French version see *ibid.*, 311–21).

2. ECKHART AND MARGUERITE PORETE

2.1 *Marguerite Porete's Trial and Condemnation:
Her Punishment for Being a "Free Spirit?"*

We know very little about Marguerite Porete. She only enters the stage of world history when she is condemned in Paris for being a relapsed heretic and finally has to enter the stake to be burned publicly. Her life would probably have remained a complete secret to us if the documents of the process had not been preserved carefully. They are still available in the national archives in Paris.⁷⁴

I will only recapitulate the most essential information mainly transmitted to us by the case files.⁷⁵ Sometime before 1306, "Margarita dicta Porete"⁷⁶—a certain Beguine ("quedam beguina")⁷⁷—was punished for having written a heretical book (which Romana Guarnieri identified as the *Mirouer des simples ames*).⁷⁸ Bishop Guy II of Cambrai ordered the book to be burned in her presence and forbade her any further distribution of it. But Marguerite did not listen to him. Encouraged by three clerics who confirmed the orthodoxy of the work—among them the famous theologian Godfrey of Fontaines—she sent it to John of Castro Villani, bishop of Châlons-sur-Marne, "et pluribus aliis personis simplicibus, begardis et

⁷⁴ For a list of the documents see Paul Verdeyen, "Le procès d'inquisition contre Marguerite Porete et Guiard de Cressonessart (1309–1310)," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 81, 1–2 (1986), 47–95, see 49–50. See also Robert E. Lerner, "An 'Angel of Philadelphia' in the Reign of Philip the Fair: the Case of Guiard of Cressonessart," in *Order and Innovation in the Middle Ages*, ed. William C. Jordan (Princeton: 1976), 343–64 (notes: 529–40), see 345–46. Verdeyen, *ibid.*, was the first to publish the preserved case files completely.

⁷⁵ For information about Marguerite's trial see, e.g. Leicht, Marguerite Porete (see above, note 1), 333–57; Marguerite Porete, *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, trans. Ellen L. Babinsky (New York: 1993), 20–26 (Introduction).

⁷⁶ Verdeyen, "Le procès" (see above, note 74), 51, 78.

⁷⁷ Verdeyen, "Le procès" (see above, note 74), 60. A variant is "dicta beguina" (*ibid.*, 78).

⁷⁸ Guarnieri published her discovery for the first time in the "Osservatore Romano" (16 June 1946) under the title "Lo specchio delle anime semplice e Margherita Porette." The critical edition of the "Mirouer" is Marguerite Porete, *Le mirouer des simples ames*, ed. Romana Guarnieri; Margareta Porete, *Speculum simplicium animarum*, ed. Paul Verdeyen, Corpus Christianorum 69 (Turnholt: 1986). An English translation is provided by Ellen L. Babinsky: Marguerite Porete, *The Mirror of Simple Souls* (see above, note 75). In spite of Guarnieri's pioneering research, the question of Marguerite's authorship is still open for discussion. See Lydia Wegener, "Freiheitsdiskurs und Beginnenverfolgung um 1308—der Fall der Marguerite Porete," in 1308. *Eine Topographie historischer Gleichzeitigkeit*, ed. Andreas Speer and David Wirmer, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 35 (Berlin: 2010), 199–236.

aliis, tamquam bonum”⁷⁹ (“and to several other simple people, beghards and others, as if it were a good book”).

After being arrested and handed over to William of Paris OP, Marguerite refused any collaboration with the Inquisition, even after 15 sentences selected from the *Mirouer* had been condemned as heretical by a commission of 21 renowned theologians—among them Henry of Friemar and Nicholas of Lyra.⁸⁰ Finally, Marguerite was sentenced to death and she ended her days on the Place de Grève on 1 June 1310.

But why was the judgement so harsh? Was it because Marguerite was regarded as a Free Spirit? A careful analysis of the case files reveals that the only answer is a clear “No:” Marguerite’s judges are not interested in a “Free Spirit” heresy—a concept still unknown to them. Instead, the official documents are carefully shaped to present her as a “bad Beguine” (i.e. as a typical member of an irregular and potentially dangerous movement of Beguines and Beghards).⁸¹ This is even reflected by the two condemned sentences chosen for publication:⁸²

Quod anima adnichilata dat licentiam virtutibus nec est amplius in earum servitute, quia non habet eas quoad usum, sed virtutes obediunt ad nutum.⁸³
[The annihilated soul dismisses the virtues and is not in their service any more because it does not need them any more, but the virtues obey the soul immediately.]

Quod talis anima non curat de consolationibus Dei nec de donis eius, nec debet curare nec potest, quia tota intenta est circa Deum, et sic impediretur eius intentio circa Deum.⁸⁴ [Such a soul does not care for God’s solace or for his gifts nor is she obliged to or able to because she is absolutely focused on God and therefore she would be distracted from her focus on God.]

Whereas the first sentence can easily be misunderstood as invitation to an antinomistic attitude threatening Christian solidarity, the second seemingly ridicules the devices of the church in offering solace to the faithful. Both arguments do not reflect the specific theological and philosophical doctrine of the *Mirouer* but common reproaches against “undomesticated”

⁷⁹ Verdeyen, “Le procès” (see above, note 74), 78.

⁸⁰ For a full list of the theologians, see Verdeyen, “Le procès” (see above, note 74), 53.

⁸¹ See Wegener, *Freiheitsdiskurs* (see above, note 78), section 3.

⁸² A third sentence is cited in a chronicle but not published officially. See Verdeyen, “Le procès” (see above, note 74), 88. Twelve of the 15 condemned sentences taken from the “*Mirouer*” remain unknown to us.

⁸³ Verdeyen, “Le procès” (see above, note 74), 51.

⁸⁴ Verdeyen, “Le procès” (see above, note 74), 51.

Beguines and Beghards known since the second half of the 13th century.⁸⁵ Later on in the 14th century these accusations will also become stock elements of propaganda against the "Heresy of the Free Spirit."⁸⁶

In congruence with the established stereotype of a "bad Beguine," Marguerite is condemned for her pertinacity and her rebellion against the authorities.⁸⁷

2.2 Meister Eckhart and the "*Mirouer des Simples Ames Anienties*:" A Source of Inspiration?

Though we do not have any definite proof that Eckhart knew Marguerite's book, this is quite often taken for granted⁸⁸ because the Dominican's stay in Paris shortly after her death and the doctrinal similarities between his own oeuvre and the *Mirouer* seem to speak well for themselves.⁸⁹ But a closer look at the historical circumstances and the literary parallels reveals that Eckhart's predilection for the *Mirouer* is nothing but a fragile hypothesis.

First of all, let us consider the reception of the *Mirouer* within its own time. Although the treatise is sometimes appreciated as the biggest success of women writers in the 12th and 13th centuries,⁹⁰ one should avoid any exaggeratedly optimistic estimation of its circulation. As Robert Lerner puts it: "To say, then, that we can identify at least eight or ten French 'Mirrors' in existence in the vicinity of the Low Countries between circa 1300 and circa 1500 would seem to be on the mark."⁹¹ Thus, it is hardly realistic

⁸⁵ See Wegener, *Freiheitsdiskurs* (see above, note 78), paragraph 4.

⁸⁶ See above.

⁸⁷ See the final judgement of William of Paris OP in Verdeyen, "Le procès" (see above, note 74), 81–82. Apart from Marguerite's disregard for the bishop's condemnation of her book, she is punished for her refusal to swear the oath necessary for a formal inquisition (the *iuramentum de veritate dicenda*) and for her persistent silence during the interrogations.

⁸⁸ See, e.g. Ruh, *Meister Eckhart* (see above, note 50), 97, 104–08; Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism. Men and Women in the New Mysticism—1200–1350* (The Presence of God. A History of Western Christian Mysticism) 3 (New York: 1998), 246; Maria Lichtmann, "Marguerite Porete and Meister Eckhart. *The Mirror of Simple Souls* Mirrored," in *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics. Hadewijch of Brabant, Mechthild of Magdeburg, and Marguerite Porete*, ed. Bernard McGinn (New York: 1995), 65–86, esp. 65, 69–71.

⁸⁹ See above.

⁹⁰ See Ruh, *Geschichte* (see above, note 2), 345; see also Peters, *Religiöse Erfahrung* (see above, note 12), 67–68.

⁹¹ Robert E. Lerner, "New Light on *The Mirror of Simple Souls*," *Speculum* 85, 1 (January 2010), 91–116. I am indebted to Professor Lerner for sending me his important contribution before its official publication.

to assume that the *Mirouer* quite naturally fell into Eckhart's hands during his second Parisian professorship.

Of course, one might reply that the Thuringian could read one of the confiscated copies of Marguerite's work,⁹² but there are a number of counterarguments casting doubt upon this theory: (1) First of all, we do not know if any copies of the *Mirouer* were actually handed over to the inquisitors. We do not even know if this was really expected because the case files are written in a very formal way with standard phrases—among them the obligatory demand that copies of the heretical book have to be delivered.⁹³ (2) Even if one or more copies of the *Mirouer* were handed over, there was plenty of time to destroy them before Eckhart's arrival. (3) But on the assumption that one copy of the condemned book had survived in the Dominican monastery: how do we know that Eckhart was allowed to read it or that he wanted to read it? We should not ignore that Eckhart was at that time a thoroughly orthodox, highly respected Dominican who never expresses any kind of aversion against the Inquisition. (4) And finally—even if Eckhart had access to the *Mirouer*, one crucial problem still remains unsolved: Marguerite's treatise was written in French, and without the existence of a complete Latin translation the German Dominican was probably incapable of reading it.⁹⁴

But what about the possibility of an indirect reception? Of course, Eckhart may have heard about the process either by his fellow Dominicans in Paris or by other sources. But that does not necessarily mean that he also gained a profound knowledge of Marguerite's positions. Also, we neither know if he had access to the case files nor if he was interested in them. Finally, it remains a secret to what extent Marguerite's death was still present in public concerns one year after her condemnation. We can only rely on the written sources and they give a quite disappointing impression. Her execution is only mentioned in one contemporary chronicle which informs us that she was not burned alone on the first

⁹² See Lichtmann, "Marguerite Porete" (see above, note 88), 70. See also Edmund Colledge and J.C. Marler, "'Poverty of the Will': Ruusbroec, Eckhart and The Mirror of Simple Souls," in *Jan van Ruusbroec: the Sources, Content and Sequels of his Mysticism*, ed. P. Mommaers and N. De Paepe, Mediaevalia Lovaniensia. Series 1, Studia 12 (Leuven: 1984), 14–47, see 15.

⁹³ See Verdeyen, "Le procès" (see above, note 74), 82.

⁹⁴ See Lerner, "New Light" (see above, note 91). Lerner points out that the extracts offered to the theologians judging the "Mirouer" were probably not taken from a full Latin translation. The method of isolating single sentences from their original context and translating them into Latin is also known from the process against Meister Eckhart.

day of June in 1310 but together with a relapsed Jew who was accused of having spat at images of the Virgin Mary.⁹⁵

All in all, the historical circumstances do not provide us with a solid background for the thesis that Eckhart had a deep direct knowledge of Marguerite's *Mirouer*. Of course the possibility still remains, but it should not be taken as a fact.

And what about the literary evidence? In the following, I will turn to three aspects that seem to prove Eckhart's knowledge of the *Mirouer*: (1) the general parallels between Marguerite's work and Eckhart's writings concerning their concepts of freedom; (2) the thesis that Eckhart intended to provide Marguerite's unorthodox ideas with a more profound theological and philosophical background; and (3) the special affinity of Eckhart's famous Sermon 52—the so-called *Armutspredigt* ("Poverty Sermon")—to the *Mirouer*. Each aspect would deserve a deep examination, but I will confine myself to some essential remarks.

1. The astonishing parallels between the *Mirouer* and Eckhart's oeuvre have often been recognized.⁹⁶ Both are promoting a concept of inner freedom that is intrinsically linked with a thorough transformation of man's existence: the human soul is seen as an entity capable of transcending itself and thus becoming godlike. In other words, the radical difference between God and man is not regarded as the latter's inescapable fate but as a challenge, offering the fascinating perspective of union with God for those who recognize their inward potential to overcome the discrepancy between themselves and their Creator. The ontological basis for their deification is provided by a divine part within the soul—the "Plus of the Soul"⁹⁷ as Marguerite calls it, or the "Spark of the Soul"⁹⁸ in Eckhart's terminology. God's dialectic relationship towards his creation—his being immanent and transcendent at the same time, which Marguerite expresses in her

⁹⁵ The report is transmitted to us in the continuation of the chronicle of Guillaume de Nangis (d. 1300); see Verdeyen, "Le procès" (see above, note 74), 88–89. See also Lerner, "An 'Angel of Philadelphia'" (see above, note 74), 350; 530, note 14.

⁹⁶ See, e.g. Ruh, *Meister Eckhart* (see above, note 50), 102; Amy Hollywood, "Suffering Transformed. Marguerite Porete, Meister Eckhart, and the Problem of Women's Spirituality," in *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics* (see above, note 88), 87–113, see 102; Michael Sells, "The Pseudo-Woman and the Meister. 'Unsayings' and Essentialism," in *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics* (see above, note 88), 114–64, see 116.

⁹⁷ In the Middle French version (ed. Guarnieri, see above, note 78): "le plus de ceste Ame" (44, l. 103).

⁹⁸ The Middle High German term is *vünkelin*. See Pr. 2 (DW I, 39.4). Eckhart also knows several other terms for this divine part within the soul.

famous image of the “Loingprés” (the “Farnear”)⁹⁹—thus gains a special quality with regard to the human soul: God joins himself to the soul in such an intimate way that the immense gap between himself and man seems to be closed: the soul “is so hidden and placed in God, that neither the world nor the flesh nor demons are able to hurt her,” as “Love” claims in Marguerite’s *Mirouer*.¹⁰⁰ And, in a similar way, Eckhart writes about the divine man that “he is wholly in God, and God is around him as my cap is round my head.”¹⁰¹

Without doubt, these expressions are daring and they even remind us strongly of the common reproaches against the Free Spirits in the 14th century.¹⁰² But we should not forget that neither Eckhart nor Marguerite talk about an *absolute* identification between God and man. They both take care to stress God’s transcendence by insisting that man is entirely dependent on God’s grace streaming into his soul;¹⁰³ that the union does not blur the difference between God and man but is realized as an identity in diversity;¹⁰⁴ and that man cannot contribute anything with his own natural powers to his union with God.¹⁰⁵

Obviously, both Marguerite and Eckhart are participating in the tradition of practical Christian metaphysics that originates in Patristic philosophy and centers upon man’s turning to the innermost part of his soul—that part where God is hidden.¹⁰⁶ But does that necessarily mean

⁹⁹ Ed. Guarnieri (see above, note 78), 168, ll. 20, 25.

¹⁰⁰ Chapter 44 (trans. Babinsky, see above, note 75), 124.

¹⁰¹ Counsel II (trans. Colledge, see above, note 24), 260.

¹⁰² See above, section 1.2.2.

¹⁰³ See the first words in the prologue of the *Mirouer*: “Soul, touched by God and removed from sin at the first stage of grace, is carried by divine graces to the seventh stage of grace” (trans. Babinsky, see above, note 75), 80. For Eckhart, see, e.g. Pr. 33 (DW II, 152.4–6): “Der gnåde werk ist, daz si die sêle snel machet und gevüege ze allen götlichen werken, wan diu gnåde vliuzet ûz dem götlichen brunnen und ist ein glichnisse gotes und smacket als got und machet die sêle gote glich” [“It is the work of grace to make the soul swift and bend to divine works because grace is flowing out of the divine fountain and is God’s simile and tastes of God and makes the soul similar to God”] [My translation].

¹⁰⁴ See the discussion about Eckhart’s doctrine of analogy below. Marguerite uses the topic of “spiritual drunkenness” to stress the remaining difference between the Creator and his creature: the soul feels like getting drunk by God’s superabundance without becoming identical with him. See Chapter 23 (trans. Babinsky, see above, note 75), 105–06.

¹⁰⁵ Marguerite stresses the necessity of the soul’s absolute passivity several times. See, e.g. Chapter 45 (trans. Babinsky, see above, note 75), 125: “O Lord God, says this Soul, what will the Soul do who believes this about you? God: She will do nothing, says God; but I will do my work in her without her.” Eckhart discusses man’s inability to contribute anything to his union with God most profoundly in Sermons 101 to 104, his famous “Gottesgeburtzyklus” (“Cycle about the Birth of God”).

¹⁰⁶ See Theo Kobusch, “Epoptie—Metaphysik des inneren Menschen,” *Quaestio* 5 (2005), 23–36; Kobusch, “Mystik als Metaphysik des moralischen Seins. Bemerkungen zur

that Eckhart and Marguerite are immediately connected with each other? Maybe one should be careful about that and recognize the differences between their concepts of freedom.

For example, Marguerite thoroughly rejects the capacities of the intellect. Neither is man able to understand divine truths with his cognitive powers¹⁰⁷ nor is the "Plus of the Soul" (i.e. the divine part within the soul) characterized as intellect. Rather, it is the manifestation of God's love that transforms man into God by its assimilating powers.¹⁰⁸ Eckhart's Dominican preference for the intellect¹⁰⁹ remains external to Marguerite's teaching, which is almost exclusively focused on the will.¹¹⁰ Therefore, the Thuringian's famous theorem "Deus est intelligere"¹¹¹ ("God is understanding")

spekulativen Ethik Meister Eckharts," in *Abendländische Mystik im Mittelalter: (Symposion Kloster Engelberg 1984)*, ed. Kurt Ruh, Germanistische Symposien-Berichtsbände 7 (Stuttgart: 1986), 49–62; Kobusch, *Christliche Philosophie. Die Entdeckung der Subjektivität* (Darmstadt: 2006), esp. 138–51 (the chapter "Epoptie. Metaphysik des inneren Menschen").

¹⁰⁷ See *Mirouer*, Chapter 43 (trans. Babinsky, see above, note 75, 122): "Ah, Reason, says Love, you will always be one-eyed, you and all those who are fed by your doctrine. For, to be sure, one has faulty vision who sees things before his eyes and does not understand them at all. And so it is with you." Eckhart on the contrary trusts in the power of reason to understand even divine things. See, e.g. Pr. 101 (DW IV/1:342.33–35).

¹⁰⁸ See *Mirouer*, Chapter 52 (trans. Babinsky, see above, note 75), 129–30: "This Soul, says Love, has entered into the abundances and flowings of divine Love, not, says Love, by the attainment of divine Understanding; for it could not be that any intellect, however enlightened, could attain any of the flowings of divine Love. But the love of such a Soul is so conjoined to the flowings of the greater part [in French: *du plus*] of this absolute divine Love (not by attainment of the Intellect of Love, but by attainment absolute of her love), that the Soul is adorned." See also *ibid.*, Chapter 21, 104: "I am God, says Love, for Love is God and God is Love, and this Soul is God by the condition of Love. I am God by divine nature and this Soul is God by righteousness of Love. Thus this precious beloved of mine is taught and guided by me, without herself, for she is transformed into me, and such a perfect one, says Love, takes my nourishment."

¹⁰⁹ See, e.g. *Counsels on Discernment*, Counsel 7 (trans. Colledge, see above, note 24), 255: "Only he whom God is present in everything and who employs his reason in the highest degree and has enjoyment in it knows anything of true peace and has a real kingdom of heaven." Eckhart reproaches the will for taking God under the coat of goodness and not God himself. See Pr. 9 (DW I, 153.3–5): "Wille nimet got under dem kleide der güete. Vernünfticheit nimet got blöz, als er entkleidet ist von güete und von wesene" [trans. Frank Tobin, in *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, ed. Bernard McGinn (Mahwah, N.J.: 1986), 258: "The will perceives God in the garment of goodness. The understanding perceives God bare, as he is stripped of goodness and being"]. The "Spark of the Soul" as intellect (*vernünfticheit*) must be separated from the intellect as a natural power of the soul in Eckhart's teaching. See Wouter Goris, "Die Freiheit des Denkens. Meister Eckhart und die Pariser Tradition," in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt*, ed. Andreas Speer and Lydia Wegener, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 32 (Berlin: 2005), 283–97, esp. 295.

¹¹⁰ According to the *Mirouer*, human will is endowed with the nobility to become one with God's will. Reason, on the other hand, is seen as a slave to the soul and finally has to die (see Chapter 87).

¹¹¹ See *Quaest. par. I* (LW V, 37–48). See also Pr. 66 (DW III, 124.1–3).

finds no support in the *Mirouer*, which actively participates in mystical traditions strongly shaped by Cistercian and Franciscan theology.¹¹²

Equally important is another characteristic of Marguerite's treatise: it considers union with God possible only as the ultimate goal of a long ascent that is subdivided into seven stages. Apart from the fact that Eckhart's doctrine of detachment does not include such a step-by-step approach to the divine, these stages are defined by several elements which have no support in the Dominican's teaching: (1) The ascent is not possible for everybody but just for the elect; thus, Marguerite's concept is intended for a spiritual elite.¹¹³ (2) The death of nature can only be achieved by a strict form of *imitatio Christi* (i.e. exactly those forms of ascetic practice which Eckhart rejects).¹¹⁴ This is often overlooked by modern research because Marguerite concentrates mainly on the higher stages of the ascent. (3) In order to break one's own will Marguerite gives the advice to surrender oneself to another human being—a thought absent from Eckhart's teaching but prominent in mystical prose of the 14th century, such as the writings of Rulman Merswin, Johannes Tauler's sermons, or the anonymous "Book of Spiritual Poverty."¹¹⁵ (4) The sixth stage (the highest achievable

¹¹² See Leicht, *Marguerite Porete* (see above, note 1), esp. Part 3: "Denken. Eine theologische Erschließung des *Mirouer*" (163–295).

¹¹³ See, e.g. Chapter 98 (trans. Babinsky, see above, note 75), 172; (Love is addressing the annihilated souls): "You ladies, to whom God has abundantly given this life by His divine goodness without withholding anything, and not only this life which we describe, but also the one of whom no human speaks, you will recognize your practice in this book. And those who are not of this kind, nor were, nor will be, will not feel this being, nor understand it. They cannot do it, nor will they do it. They are not, as you know, of the lineage of which we speak, no more than the angels of the first order are Seraphim, nor can they be, for God does not give them the being of Seraphim."

¹¹⁴ In Chapter 63 (trans. Babinsky, see above, note 75), 140, the soul addresses Jesus Christ, first deriding those who are satisfied with having died the "death of sin" and then turning to the more noble who have reached the next level (i.e. the "death of nature"). They are those "who will never forget the works of your sweet courtesy, that is, the rejection and the poverty and the insufferable torments which you have suffered for us. These will never forget the gifts of your suffering, which are always a mirror and exemplar for them." In Chapter 118 it becomes clear that this form of *imitatio Christi* is reserved for the second stage of the ascent. Having reached this stage, "the creature abandons self and strains self above all to do the counsels of men, in the work of mortification of nature, in despising riches, delights and honors, in order to accomplish the perfection of the evangelical counsel of which Jesus Christ is the exemplar. Thus [the Soul] fears neither the loss of possessions, nor people's words, nor the feebleness of the body, for her beloved does not fear them, and so neither can the Soul who is overtaken by Him" (trans. Babinsky), 189.

¹¹⁵ For Marguerite, see Chapter 118 (trans. Babinsky, see above, note 75), 190. In order to get rid of the delight in her own good works, the "creature" "obliges herself to obey another will, in abstaining from work and from will, in fulfilling another will, in order to destroy her own will. And this is difficult, much more difficult than the other two stages

during lifetime) is defined as *raptus*.¹¹⁶ Thus, the beatific vision—which Marguerite describes in terms very similar to Eckhart¹¹⁷—does not gain any consistent role as it does in Eckhart's concept of the birth of God within the ground of the soul. (5) One might answer that the differences between Eckhart's and Marguerite's teaching are a result of Eckhart's efforts to lead the Beguine's daring ideas back into orthodoxy. But is there any valid proof of that? Let us consider just one famous example, Eckhart's doctrine of analogy. Kurt Ruh claims that Eckhart developed this doctrine to provide Marguerite's provocative statement that the annihilated soul participates in God's substance with a solid theological and philosophical background.¹¹⁸ But there are severe arguments against this theory:

- The doctrine of analogy already exists at the very beginning of the 14th century because we find it extensively discussed in the *Sermones et Lectiones super Ecclesiastici* (circa 1305) and also mentioned in the first

were." For Merswin, see, e.g. his "Bannerbüchlein" (see above, note 66), 400; for Tauler see *Die Predigten Taulers*, ed. Ferdinand Vetter, Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters 11 (Berlin: 1910; repr. Dublin, Zürich: 1968), 223, ll. 16–30 (Sermon 49); for the "Book of Spiritual Poverty" see *Das Buch von geistlicher Armuth*, ed. Heinrich Seuse Denifle (Munich: 1877), 9–13 (discussing the question "Ob friheit gehindert werde, so sich der mensche git in gehorsame eins andern menschen")/"If freedom is endangered when somebody submits himself to somebody else").

¹¹⁶ See *Mirouer*, Chapter 58 (trans. Babinsky, see above, note 75), 135. Love is saying about the annihilated soul that "she is in the depths of the fifth stage with her Lover. There nothing is lacking to her, and so she is often carried up to the sixth, but this is of little duration. For it is an aperture, like a spark, which quickly closes, in which one cannot long remain."

¹¹⁷ See *Mirouer*, Chapter 118 (trans. Babinsky, see above, note 75), 193: "But God sees Himself in her by His divine majesty, who clarifies this Soul with Himself, so that she sees only that there is nothing except God Himself Who is, from whom all things are. And He who is, is God Himself. And thus she does not see according to herself, for whoever sees the One who is does not see except God Himself, who sees Himself in this same Soul by His divine majesty." See Eckhart, Pr. 76 (DW III, 310.1–312.1): "Ez ist ze wizenne, daz daz ein ist nâch dingen: got bekennen und von gote bekant ze sinne und got sehen und von gote gesehen ze sinne. In dem bekennen wir got und sehen, daz er uns machet gesehende und bekennende. Und als der luft, der erliuhtet ist, niht anders enist, wan daz er erliuhtet, wan von dem erliuhtet er, daz er erliuhtet ist, und alsô bekennen wir, daz wir bekant sîn und daz er uns sich machet bekennende" [trans. Tobin, see above, note 109, 327: "One should know that to know God and to be known by God, to see God and to be seen by God, are in reality one and the same. To know and to see God (is to know and see) that he is the one who causes us to see and know. Just as the air which is illuminated is nothing other than air which lights up (and it lights up by being illuminated), so too do we know that we are known and that he (God) makes us knowers"].

¹¹⁸ See Ruh, "Meister Eckhart und die Spiritualität der Beginen" (see above, note 50), 334; Ruh, *Meister Eckhart* (see above, note 50), 103.

of the *Questiones Parisienses* (circa 1302/03).¹¹⁹ Therefore, it is surely not a reaction to Marguerite's condemnation, which took place several years later.

- As a defense of the *Mirouer*, Eckhart's doctrine of analogy would have been a complete failure because the Dominican's insistence that God's being and our being is the same being, which stresses the identity between God and man, was regarded as a severe attack on orthodoxy by his opponents.¹²⁰ Actually, in Eckhart's view the difference between God and man is constituted by man's absolute dependence on God's grace, but that does not diminish the provocative potential of his doctrine, which finds its expression in the bull of condemnation against him.¹²¹ In Marguerite's trial, on the contrary, the contents of the *Mirouer* were of no importance; instead the accusation of heresy was based on her disciplinary offences.¹²²
- Finally, we have to take into consideration that Eckhart's doctrine of analogy is intrinsically linked with his *Opus tripartitum*.¹²³ Thus, it is situated in an academic context and not in the confrontation with any kind of Beguine spirituality. This is also true of other important aspects of Eckhart's teaching. As Wouter Goris has shown, his concept of freedom participates in the discussions about freedom in the University of Paris.¹²⁴ So one must wonder if a laywoman like Marguerite Porete whose teaching never found access to an academic elite was really able to attract Eckhart's attention.

¹¹⁹ See In Eccli., nn. 52–53 (LW II, 280–82); Quaest. par. I, n. 11 (LW V, 46–47). For the chronology, see Loris Sturlese, "Meister Eckhart in der Bibliotheca Amploniana. Neues zur Datierung des 'Opus tripartitum,'" in Sturlese, *Homo divinus. Philosophische Projekte in Deutschland zwischen Meister Eckhart und Heinrich Seuse* (Stuttgart: 2007), 95–106.

¹²⁰ See Angela Schifffhauer, "'nos filii dei sumus analogice.' Die Analogielehre Meister Eckharts in der Verteidigungsschrift," in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt* (see above, note 109), 356–89.

¹²¹ Here, the supposed identity between man and God is of major importance. See "In agro dominico" (*Enchiridion Symbolorum/Kompendium der Glaubenerkenntnisse*, ed. Heinrich Denzinger and Peter Hünermann, 40. Auflage [Freiburg: 2005], no. 950–80), errors 10–13, 20–22 (no. 960–63, 970–72).

¹²² See above, section 2.1.

¹²³ See Jan A. Aertsen, "Der Systematiker Eckhart," in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt* (see above, note 109), 189–230, see 223.

¹²⁴ See Wouter Goris, "Die Freiheit des Denkens" (see above, note 109).

Concerning the so-called *Armutspredigt* ("Poverty Sermon")¹²⁵ the parallels between Eckhart and Marguerite are definitely striking.¹²⁶ Apart from that, it is considered to be a very late sermon—probably written in Cologne during the 1320s¹²⁷—which makes it also possible from a chronological point of view that it is influenced by the *Mirouer*. But even here we must take into account that Eckhart does not necessarily depend on Marguerite's work. I will confine myself just to one small aspect: in the *Armutspredigt*, Eckhart demands several times to let go of "God" (as man's opposite which is constituted by man's will to self-assertion) for the sake of true union with God.¹²⁸ This recalls the 92nd chapter of the *Mirouer* where the soul addresses God telling him: "I unencumber myself from you, and from myself, and from my neighbors, and I will tell you how. I release you, and myself, and all my neighbours."¹²⁹ Therefore, it is not inconceivable that Eckhart was inspired by Marguerite's work. On the other hand, the topic is not exclusively addressed by Eckhart and Marguerite but appears in different contexts. The "Compilatio de novo spiritu" (late 13th century), for example, cites as error number 19: "Quod dicitur, quod homo non est bonus, nisi dimittat deum propter deum, similiter de Pelagii stultitia est."¹³⁰ So without doubt both Eckhart and Marguerite participate actively in the mystical discourse of the late 13th and early 14th centuries which is suspiciously observed by the official church. But this does not necessarily mean that the analogies between the *Mirouer*, Eckhart's *Armutspredigt*, and his other works result from any immediate influence.

What is the result of these considerations about Meister Eckhart's relationship to Marguerite Porete? We have to realize that his knowledge of the *Mirouer*—so often taken for granted—is more a historiographical concept than a historical fact. In the end, only two aspects seem to be indisputable: if Eckhart knew Marguerite, he did not know her as a Free Spirit, and even if he was impressed by her ideas, he did not develop his own doctrine with the intention of defending hers.

¹²⁵ Pr. 52 (DW II, 486–506).

¹²⁶ See Colledge and Marler, "Poverty of the Will" (see above, note 92).

¹²⁷ Maybe in 1327. See *Meister Eckhart. Werke I* (see above, note 16), 1051.

¹²⁸ DW II, 492.6–7: "hie stuont ich ledic gotes und aller dinge;" DW II, 493.7–8: "Her umbe sô biten wir got, daz wir gotes ledic werden."

¹²⁹ Trans. Babinsky (see above, note 75), 168.

¹³⁰ Wilhelm Preger, *Geschichte der deutschen Mystik im Mittelalter*, 1 (Leipzig: 1874), 463 (for the complete document, see 461–71).

3. NUNS AS HERETICS? THE "FREE SPIRIT" WITHIN DOMINICAN CONVENTS

Finally, let us return once again to the Dominican nuns. Their reception of Meister Eckhart—but also of other Dominican preachers—is demonstrated by a broad range of mystical poems that were intended to be read within the convents.¹³¹ And here, within this thoroughly orthodox context, we find remarks that remind us very strongly of ideas otherwise ascribed to the Free Spirit. I just mention two poems published by Kurt Ruh in his contribution about "Mystical Speculation in 14th-Century Rhymes."¹³² The first one, called "Ein meister der seit vns das wesen blos" ("A Meister talking to us about pure being"), contains several daring expressions about the "vriien armen" (the "free and poor") who have become one with God in the divine "abgrvnde" ("abyss").¹³³ The speaker even claims: "Do wart mir benomen alles vnderscheid"¹³⁴ ("All difference was taken away from me")—a statement strongly opposed in Heinrich Seuse's *The Little Book of the Truth* because of its dangerous closeness to the Free Spirit heresy.¹³⁵

Another very short poem called "Nv vrowent uch vil edeln kint" ("Now be joyful, you noble children") is nothing else but a eulogy on the "vryen geysthe" ("Free Spirits").¹³⁶ Quite contrary to the Dominican *vitae*, these *perfecti* are praised for being free of all images ("Sie stent aller bilde bloz")—a claim heavily criticized by those 14th-century texts that are explicitly opposing Free Spirit positions.¹³⁷

How should we judge these poems? Are they a proof that members of the Free Spirit were trying to undermine the orthodoxy of the convents?

¹³¹ See, e.g. Ruth Meyer, "Maister Eghart spricht von wesen bloss. Beobachtungen zur Lyrik der deutschen Mystik," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 113, (Sonderheft Mystik) (1994), 63–82; Loris Sturlese, "Das sog. 'Gedicht auf Meister Eckhart,'" in Sturlese, *Homo divinus* (see above, note 119), 231–32.

¹³² "Mystische Spekulation in Reimversen des 14. Jahrhunderts" (see above, note 5).

¹³³ Ruh, "Mystische Spekulation" (see above, note 5), 193 (stanza 3, l. 1; stanza 4, l. 4; stanza 6, ll. 1, 4).

¹³⁴ Ruh, "Mystische Spekulation" (see above, note 5), 193 (stanza 5, l. 4).

¹³⁵ Heinrich Seuse, *Das Buch der Wahrheit* (see above, note 55), 60, ll. 69–71. Here, the "Nameless Wild One," referring to Eckhart, says: "Ich han vernomen, daz ein hoher meister si gewesen, und daz der absprechi allen underscheit" ["I heard that there was a great master, who denied each kind of difference"] [My translation]. The disciple of Truth opposes this statement, explaining that there is a remaining difference between the three divine persons as well as between God and man.

¹³⁶ Ruh, "Mystische Spekulation" (see above, note 5), 197.

¹³⁷ See above, section 1.2.2. Here, the term "bild" ("image") refers to all kinds of perception, esp. the image of Christ in his humanity, but also to corporal and imaginary visions extensively described in the 14th-century *vitae* of Dominican nuns (see above, section 1.2.1).

Surely not. But they increase once more the complexity of the discourse about inward freedom in the 14th century by indicating that Eckhartian thoughts—though deprived of their complexity—could be very openly labeled as belonging to the Free Spirit without associating them with any kind of heresy.

THE MIRROR OF SIMPLE SOULS:
THE ETHICS OF MARGARET PORETTE¹

Jack C. Marler

To an essay that was concerned with Margaret Porette, Meister Eckhart, and John Ruusbroec and that had been delivered as a lecture at a scholarly

¹ About the spelling of "Porette," it can be observed that, among the texts in manuscript that furnish testimony about Margaret of Valenciennes, the name is given as "Porete," "Porrette," and "Poirette." See Paul Frédéricq, ed. and comp., *Corpus documentorum inquisitionis haereticae pravitatis neerlandicae: verzameling van stukken betreffende de pauselijke en bisschoppelijke inquisitie in de Nederlanden (1025-1528)*, five volumes (Ghent: J. Vuylsteke, 1889-1902), vol. 1 (1889), pp. 155-160; see the anonymous continuator of the *Chronicle* of William of Nangis in Hercule Pierre Joseph François Geraud, ed., *Chronique latine de Guillaume de Nangis de 1173 à 1300 avec les continuations de cette chronique de 1300 à 1368*, two volumes (Paris: Jules Renouard, 1843), vol. 1, pp. 379-380; see Charles-Victor Langlois, "Marguerite Porete," *Revue historique* 54 (Janvier-Avril 1894), pp. 295-299; and see Paul Verdeyen, "Le procès d'inquisition contre Marguerite Porete et Guiard de Cressonessart," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 81 (1986), pp. 47-94.

In modern French, rendering the name as "Porette" is well attested. See, for example, Marc Antoine René de Voyer Argenson, marquis de Paulmy, and André Guillaume Contant d'Orville, *Livres de Géographie et d'Histoire imprimés en françois au seizième siècle. Suite de la huitième partie*, 18 volumes. *Mélanges tirés d'une grande bibliothèque*, 70 volumes in 69 (Paris: Moutard, 1779-1788), volume 12 (1784) of the suite (that is, volume 15 of the *Mélanges*), p. 4:

La Place de Grève est vis-à-vis de l'Hôtel-de-Ville, & elle a été établie en vertu d'une Chartre du Roi Louis le Jeune, sur la demande des Bourgeois de Paris, qui déclara que, moyennant la somme de soixante-dix livres parisis que ces Bourgeois lui payeroient, la Place resteroit libre, & qu'on n'y élèveroit aucun bâtiment. Depuis ce temps, on fait dans cette Place différentes cérémonies, telles que celle de feu de la Saint Jean; c'est là que la Ville donne des fêtes, & que se sont ordinairement les exécutions. La première est de l'année 1310; alors une femme hérétique, nommée *Marguerite Porette*, y fut brûlée. La Halle au vin y fut transportée en 1413, & la Place au charbon en 1642.

Consultation of Frédéric Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française et de tous ses dialectes du IX^e au XV^e siècle*, ten volumes (Paris: F. Vieweg, 1881-1902), shows that *porète*, *poraite*, *poraitte*, *porette*, *poirette*, and *pourette* are all the same word. Although a literal, and perhaps Joycean, rendering of "Maguerite Porrete" into modern English would be "pearl onion," the sense of *porète* in the speech of mediaeval Hainaut is most probably to have been "leek."

In the nineteenth century, in the dialect of Lille (Nord), about 135 kilometres from Valenciennes, a *porette* was an "espèce de toupie." See Pierre Legrand (Lille, 2 June 1804-13 April 1859, Lille), *Dictionnaire du patois de Lille et de ses environs* (Lille: L. Danel, 1853), p. 81. Rue Pierre Legrand, in Lille, was named after the son of the lexicographer.

It was Jean Gerson, in *De distinctione verarum revelationum*, who remarked that Margaret Porette was "from Valenciennes." About this, see Edmund Colledge, O.S.A., and

conference in Leuven in 1981,² Dr. Maria Lichtmann responded in 1993 at a gathering held at the University of Western Michigan:³

Although Edmund Colledge has traced the themes of Meister Eckhart's sermon, the *Beati pauperes spiritu*, back to Marguerite, in the process he has disparaged her work and its influence on Eckhart. In calling her the "high priestess of 'liberty of the spirit,'" and accusing her of being a "Valentinian Gnostic," Colledge displays the tendency of several modern interpreters to stand with her inquisitors in condemning Marguerite anew.⁴

Dr. Lichtmann did not identify the "several modern interpreters" but her assertion that Professor Colledge was, somewhat after the fact, an accessory of the inquisitors by whom Margaret Porette had been tried and convicted as a relapsed heretic merits consideration and response. Even if some of the claims in *The Mirror of Simple Souls* are, as its author had intended, quite beyond reason, Dr. Lichtmann furnished neither grounds by which to believe that the text should be privileged against criticism nor any by which to think that Professor Colledge was attentive to the text for reasons no better than that of validating the *argumentum ad baculum* that the inquisition had deployed.

In her essay, as proof of the "tendency" that she attributed to Professor Colledge, Dr. Lichtmann only cited the report that he and I had jointly written and presented, on 18 May 1981, to the Eleventh International

J. C. Marler, "Tractatus magistri Johannis Gerson De mistica theologia: St. Pölten, Diözesanarchiv MS 25," *Mediaeval Studies* 41 (1979), p. 379. Gerson, in error, called her "Maria."

² Edmund Colledge, O.S.A., and J. C. Marler, "Poverty of the Will": Ruusbroec, Eckhart, and *The Mirror of Simple Souls*," in Paul Mommaers and Nicholas de Paepe, edd., *Jan van Ruusbroec, the Sources, Content, and Sequels of his Mysticism*. Mediaevalia Lovaniensia, Series I, Studia XII (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1984), pp. 14–47. This essay was originally presented on 18 May 1981, in Leuven, at the Eleventh International Colloquium of the Instituut voor Middeleeuwse Studies, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, in collaboration with the Ruusbroecgenootschap (Antwerp).

³ There were two sessions, at the Twenty-Eighth International Congress on Medieval Studies, on the campus of the University of Western Michigan, Kalamazoo, 6–9 May 1993, devoted to "Eckhart and the Women Mystics" at one of which Dr. Lichtmann read her paper.

⁴ Maria Lichtmann, "Marguerite Porete and Meister Eckhart: *The Mirror for Simple Souls* Mirrored," in Bernard McGinn, ed., *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics: Hadewijch of Brabant, Mechtild of Magdeburg, and Marguerite Porete* (New York: Continuum, 1997), pp. 70–71.

In 2007, Dr. Francesca Caroline Bussey submitted her dissertation, "*The World on the End of a Reed: Marguerite Porete and the Annihilation of an Identity in Medieval and Modern Representations—A Reassessment*," to the Department of History in the University of Sydney. This work, supervised by Professor John O. Ward, furnishes much the same criticism as that of Dr. Lichtmann, though in somewhat better detail.

Colloquium of the Institute for Mediaeval Studies at the Catholic University, Leuven, and which Paul Mommaers and Norbert de Paepe, in 1984, were to publish in *Jan Van Ruusbroec: The Sources, Content, and Sequels of his Mysticism*.⁵ Dr. Lichtmann, however, also made use of the "Historical Data" that Professor Colledge had written for *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, the volume that, in collaboration with Professor Bernard McGinn, he had published in the same year as that of the meeting at Leuven.⁶

In "Historical Data," Professor Colledge described the setting in which Henry of Friemar had written *A Treatise on "An Angel was Sent," A Treatise on the Advent of the Lord*, and *A Treatise on the Incarnation of the Word*:

... these present treatises seem to have been early compositions, written in the period when Paris was the scene of the trial as a relapsed heretic of the high priestess of "liberty of the spirit," Margaret Porette, which led to her second condemnation and her death by fire at the stake, there in 1310, for her persistence in publishing her book *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, which a bishop had already pronounced heretical.⁷

It was Dr. Romana Guarnieri who, in the preface to her edition of the *Mirror*, had expounded the historical basis for referring to Margaret as "the high priestess of 'liberty of the spirit'."⁸ As Dr. Lichtmann would have known, Professor Colledge had cited the work of Dr. Guarnieri in the

⁵ It was our purpose, in 1981, to emphasize the relation between Margaret Porette and Meister Eckhart by taking seriously what Ruusbroec had noted in *XII beghinen*. Unlike, perhaps, some recent enthusiasts, Professor Colledge and I did not think it good to rush in where Ruusbroec feared to tread.

Of interest, concerning Ruusbroec, is what Professor Satoshi Kikuchi (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven) has published in "Ruusbroec's Criticism Against Heretical Doctrines in his *XII Beghinen*: His Attempted Reconstruction of the Mystical Unity in the Post-Eckhartian Era" [in Japanese], *Journal of Religious Studies* [in Japanese] 82.1 (2008), pp. 71–92. And Professor Mikel Mario Kors (Centrum voor Middeleeuwse Studies, Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen) has defended the attribution to Ruusbroec of *XII beghinen* in "Ruusbroec en de crisis van de mystiek," *Ons geestelijk erf* 75.1 (2001), pp. 116–124.

In 2008, Dr. Pyong-Gwan Pak submitted a very thorough dissertation, *The Vernacular Mystical Theology of Jan van Ruusbroec: Exploring Sources, Contexts, and Theological Practices*, to the Department of Theology at Boston College. For this work, Professor Frederick Lawrence was the supervisor.

⁶ Edmund Colledge, O.S.A., and Bernard McGinn, trans., *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981). The "Historical Data" can be found on pages 5–23.

⁷ Edmund Colledge, in Colledge and McGinn, p. 8.

⁸ Romana Guarnieri, "Il movimento del libero spirito, testi e documenti, I," *Il movimento del libero spirito dalle origini al secolo XVI*, II; "Il 'Miroir des simples ames' di Margherita Porette, III;" "Appendici," *Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà* IV (Rome: 1965), pp. 353–708.

lecture that he had given at the International Congress on the Theology of the Renewal of the Church that was sponsored by the Canadian bishops and that, from 2 through 25 August 1968, was hosted in Toronto by the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies.⁹ But Professor Robert Lerner, who devoted the greatest scrutiny to the *Mirror* in relation to the 'liberty of the spirit,' published his own findings in 1972 concerning the book and its author:

Provisionally it may be said that *The Mirror* describes a completer union between the soul and God this side of paradise than would have been accepted by most orthodox mystics and it talks of a state of complete passivity that goes beyond and then ignores the spiritual ministrations of the Church. But it postulates grace rather than nature as the motive force propelling the soul toward God and it avoids the antinomian or libertine conclusions traditionally associated with the heresy of the Free Spirit. Marguerite was probably a heretic, but had she been submissive and content to enter a cloister like Mechtild of Magdeburg, with whom she is compared, she probably would have attracted little notice. Her active life, her pertinacity, and the political situation surrounding her arrest certainly contributed to her death.¹⁰

It is on page eight, in Colledge and McGinn, that Professor Colledge refers to Margaret Porette as the "high priestess of 'liberty of the spirit'."

Professor Herman Pleij (emeritus, Universiteit van Amsterdam), on page 331 of *Dreaming of Cockaigne: Medieval Fantasies of the Perfect Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), the English translation that Diane Webb has made of *Dromen van Cocagne: Middeleeuwse fantasieën over het volmaakte leven* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1997), while discussing "both real and alleged adherents of Free Spirit thought," calls attention to Margaret Porette as "the mother superior of the movement."

Dr. Romana Guarnieri, early in the morning of 23 December 2004, died at the age of 91. See Lucetta Scaraffia, "Addii è scomparsa a 91 anni Romana Guarnieri, studiosa di storia del medioevo e stretta collaboratrice di don Giuseppe De Luca: La 'beghina' devota che apprezzava il femminismo," *Corriere della Sera* (24 December 2004), p. 35; Luisa Muraro, "L'ultima vittoria di Romana Guarnieri," *l'Unità* (1 February 2005), p. 22; and Mario Sensi, "Bio-bibliografia di Romana Guarnieri," *Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà* XVIII (Rome, 2005), pp. 31–84.

⁹ Edmund Colledge, O.S.A., "Liberty of Spirit: *The Mirror of Simple Souls*," in Laurence Kennedy Shook, C.S.B., ed., *Renewal of Religious Structures: Proceedings of the Congress on the Theology of the Renewal of the Church, Centenary of Canada, 1867–1967*, two volumes (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), vol. 2, pp. 100–117.

Pope Paul VI had signed the encyclical, *Humane vitae*, on the Feast of St. James, 25 July 1968. The encyclical was published four days later. At the Congress on the Theology of the Renewal of the Church, which commenced on 2 August, Professor Colledge distinguished himself by having absolutely nothing to say on the topic of artificial contraception.

¹⁰ Robert E. Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p. 208.

Professor Lerner, and perhaps Dr. Guarnieri, may have been among the "several modern interpreters" that Dr. Lichtmann mentioned as allies of the inquisition. When Professor Lerner, indeed, was referring to the "pertinacity" that "contributed" to the demise of Margaret Porette, he was thinking of the very words that William Humbert, the Dominican who was the Inquisitor General of France, had used to describe the manner in which the woman from Hainaut had endured her sentence of excommunication: *animo pertinaci*.¹¹ These words of disapprobation occur in the decree which shows it to be more likely that Margaret was condemned for her unbending refusal to acknowledge authority than for having written a "pestiferous book."¹² With theological officialism, as is apparent among the reasons that William gave for her consignment to the flames, she was not on speaking terms.¹³

Professor Colledge, in his lecture of 1968, had strongly emphasized resemblances in doctrine between the *Mirror* and the gnosticism of Valentinus, especially citing Irenaeus and the *Gospel of Thomas*, the second treatise in the second codex among those discovered in Egypt, near the village of Chenoboskion, in 1945.¹⁴ However, by 1981, as a result of much discussion with me about gnosticism, neoplatonism, and various

¹¹ *animo pertinaci*: This is from the sentencing of Margaret Porette that William Humbert, the Dominican inquisitor, enunciated on 31 May 1310 (Julian calendar), a Sunday. The context, as Frédéricq has published it in *Corpus documentorum* I, page 159, is worth noting:

... pro quibus contumaciis et rebellionibus evidentibus et notoriis hoc exigentibus de multorum peritorum consilio in te sic rebellem et contumacem sententiam majoris excommunicationis tulimus et in scriptis, quam, licet te notificata fuisset, post notificationem predictam fere per annum et dimidium in tue salutis dispendium sustinuisti animo pertinaci, licet tibi pluries obtulerimus nos tibi absolutionis beneficium impensuros secundum formam ecclesie, si hoc humiliter postulares...

The phrase, "animo pertinaci," also appears in the account that the continuator of the *Chronicle* of William of Nangis has given; and it was the continuator who reported that, by the authority of the provost of Paris (*Parisiensis praepositus*), Margaret suffered death "on the morrow" (*in crastino*), that is, on Monday, 1 June 1310. See Geraud, *Chronique latine* I, pages 379–380.

¹² It was William Humbert who called the book "pestiferous": "... ex quibus inquisitione et processu nobis constitit evidenter quondam composuisse te librum pestiferum continentem heresim et errores..." [Frédéricq, *Corpus documentorum* I, page 159]

¹³ Thus William Humbert complained: "... usque nunc petere contempsisti nec jurare nec respondere nobis super premissis hactenus voluisti..." [Frédéricq, *Corpus documentorum* I, page 159] For at least a year, Margaret had refused to offer testimony.

¹⁴ The discovery of the codices at Chenoboskion was recounted by Jean Dorese in *Les Livres secrets des Gnostiques d'Égypte I: Introduction aux écrits gnostiques de Khénoboskion* (Paris: Librairie Pion, 1958). Dorese subsequently published *Les livres secrets des Gnostiques d'Égypte II: Évangile selon Thomas ou les paroles de Jésus le Vivant* (Paris: Librairie Pion, 1959).

arguments under both of these topics concerning the problem of evil, he had so modified his views that we were able to publish an understanding of Margaret Porette that Dr. Lichtmann overlooked and that, for its distinction from what had been said in 1968, it seems good to reproduce in full:

Throughout, the *Mirouer* reminds us of the evil of man's fallen state. Human existence is called 'corruption's prison', an ancient Orphic formula, and 'this way of pestilence and perdition'. This is, in the human condition, inescapable, '... so long as the soul is accompanied by this sinful body in this world'; and, in chapter 117, in the development of the complex paradox of God's goodness being manifested only through the evil of the soul, it is stated that this evil is a permanent condition. Man's own ability to win freedom from this condition is limited; the soul is described as 'stripped bare of sin, so far as in its power'. Yet this is far from asserting that the evil of this condition is irremediable. None of these formulations is complete, and we may think Margaret reluctant to attempt any greater precision; yet, though she may not have arrived at any committed opinions about the nature of evil, what she does say is wholly compatible with orthodox Christian teaching, and in no way suggests that she was infected by the Manichaean dualism which taught that this evil is the consequence, beyond the help of a beneficent creator, of the work of his rival creator, the prince of darkness.¹⁵

The relation, such as it may or may not have been, between the *Gospel of Thomas* and any of the Valentinian sects has long been a topic of controversy for which dating of the text, surviving partially in Greek and completely in Coptic, is not a peripheral issue.¹⁶ Another treatise, however, the fourth in the Jung Codex, symbolizes distinctions among modes of being that are called "hylic" (τὸ ὑλικόν), "psychic" (τὸ ψυχικόν), and "pneumatic" (τὸ πνευματικόν) and that seem comparable to the hypostases of body

¹⁵ Colledge and Marler (1984), p. 33.

¹⁶ One train of scholarly argument, and only one, about the *Gospel of Thomas* is either that it may be a document of the first century that influenced the Valentinians or that it may be a document of the second century that the Valentinians influenced. Much of the reasoning according to which the *Gospel of Thomas* may be assigned a date is circular: If the text is "gnostic," it must be late and, because the text is late, it must be "gnostic." If the text is not "gnostic," it must be early and, because the text is early, it must not be "gnostic." Circular arguments, in the strictest logic, may be perfectly valid; but they are never demonstrative. Some of the controverted questions about the *Gospel of Thomas* are reviewed by Richard Valantasis in *The Gospel of Thomas* (London: Routledge, 1997), and by April D. DeConick in *Seek To See Him: Ascent and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

(*le corps*), soul (*l'ame*), and spirit (*l'esprit*) by which the *Mirror* displays the progress of life from bondage (*le servage*) to freedom (*la franchise*).¹⁷

Never the less, even if the fourth treatise of the Jung Codex may be thought a better analogue of the *Mirror* than the *Gospel of Thomas*, similarities among words, and among the use of words, are not a basis adequate to prove agreement between texts in crucial matters of doctrine. Professor April DeConick, in reference to the scholarship of Michael Williams, Christoph Marksches, and Karen King, argues that there is no “generic Gnostic religiosity” that can be predicated of all the texts that casual readers may suspect are the verbal results of an esoteric γνῶσις.¹⁸ She believes that ‘gnosticism’ is a term of disapprobation the semantic content of which is an artefact of modernity:

It is becoming increasingly clear that ‘Gnosticism’ and its adjective ‘Gnostic’ are misnomers, that is, they are not so much descriptors of historical realities as they are modern typological constructs.¹⁹

¹⁷ The fourth treatise of the Jung Codex was given considerable treatment by the late Jan Zandee, the papyrologist who was expert in what Herbert Thompson deemed the “Sub-Achmimic” dialect of Coptic, in “Gnostic Ideas on the Fall and Salvation,” *Numen* 11.1 (January 1964), pp. 13–74. Professor Malcolm Lee Peel has edited and translated the text of the fourth treatise under the title, “The Treatise on the Resurrection.” This edition and translation can be found in Harold W. Attridge, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Introductions, Texts, Translations, Indices* (Leiden: Brill, 1997). Still very useful, however, is the dissertation, *The Epistle to Rheginos: A Study in Gnostic Eschatology and its Use of the New Testament*, that Professor Peel submitted at Yale University in 1967. This work, which was supervised by Professor Paul Schubert, includes a preliminary translation of the fourth treatise.

Toward investigation of the fourth treatise, scholarship has been contributed by Henri-Charles Puech and Gilles Quispel, “Le Quatrième écrit gnostique du codex Jung,” *Vigiliae christianae* 9.2 (April–July 1955), pp. 65–102; Luther H. Martin, Jr., “The Anti-Philosophical Polemic and Gnostic Soteriology in ‘The Treatise on the Resurrection’ (CG I, 3),” *Numen* 20.1 (April 1973), pp. 20–37; Francisco García Bazán, “Sobre la resurrección (Epístola a Reginos): Traducción, Introducción y Commentario,” *Revista bíblica* 38 (1976), pp. 147–178; and M.J. Edwards, “The ‘Epistle to Rheginos’: Valentinianism in the Fourth Century,” *Novum testamentum* 37.1 (January 1995), pp. 76–91.

The doctrine of the fourth treatise is comparable to what Irenaeus described in *Adversus haereses* 1.6.1:

Τριῶν οὖν ὄντων, τὸ μὲν ὑλικόν, ὃ καὶ ἀπιστερόν καλοῦσι, κατὰ ἀνάγκην ἀπόλλυσθαι λέγουσιν, ἅτε μηδεμίαν ἐπιδείξασθαι πνοὴν ἀφθαρσίας δυνάμενον· τὸ δὲ ψυχικόν, ὃ καὶ δεξιὸν προσαγορεύουσιν, ἅτε μέσον ὄν τοῦ τε πνευματικοῦ καὶ ὑλικοῦ, ἐκεῖσε χωρεῖν, ὅπου ἂν καὶ τὴν πρόσκλισιν ποιήσῃται· τὸ δὲ πνευματικόν ἐκπεπέμφθαι, ὅπως ἐνθάδε τῷ ψυχικῷ συζυγὲν μορφωθῇ συμπαιδευθὲν αὐτῷ ἐν τῇ ἀναστροφῇ. [*Sancti Irenaei episcopi Lugdunensis detectionis et eversionis falso cognominatae agnitionis seu contra omnes haereses libri quinque*, Adolf Stieren, ed., two volumes (Leipzig: T.O. Weigel, 1853)]

¹⁸ April D. DeConick, *The Original Gospel of Thomas in Translation: With a Commentary and a New English Translation of the Complete Gospel* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2006), p. 3.

¹⁹ DeConick (2006), p. 3.

There is, of course, no record of what Irenaeus, who wrote that Valentinus had accommodated his teachings to “the heresy called ‘gnostic’” (τῆς λεγομένης γνωστικῆς αἱρέσεως), should have thought of “modern typological constructs” but, in the century following that of the second primate of Lyons, it was Porphyry, not the friend of any Christian apologists, who denominated *Enneads* 2.9 as a tractate “Against the Gnostics” (πρὸς τοὺς γνωστικούς).²⁰ This, in the *Enneads*, is the tractate that Plotinus wrote at some time between 263 and 269 and which, in the text that Porphyry edited, appears under the explanatory title “Against Those Saying the Craftsman of the World to be Evil and Saying the World to be Evil” (πρὸς τοὺς κακὸν τὸν δημιουργὸν τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τὸν κόσμον κακὸν εἶναι λέγοντας).²¹

Because gnostic discourse, as Plotinus understands it, is nothing better than a low and vulgar parody of the theological truths that he was expounding in the *Enneads* and that he believes to have been sustained by a tradition, already ancient, which reverts on Pythagoras, Parmenides, Plato, and Aristotle, he refutes it in no uncertain terms. For Plotinus and for Porphyry, the decisive feature of gnosticism is in its proposing, as Professor Benjamin Fuller has remarked, that “the world . . . is evil for no other reason than that it is a world;” and, as the world is malignant, so also, in gnostic symbolism, must be its cause or causes.²² Because the κόσμος, in this view of reality, is a metaphysical wasteland from which it is always best to flee, the gnostic adept confronts the world by replacing ethics with escapism.

In the *Mirror*, the Virtues (*Vertuz*) are featured as the instruments of Reason (*Raison*, or *dame Raison*); and the soul, as a being subject to Reason, is in bondage to the Virtues. As, however, the soul passes from herself

²⁰ Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 1.11.1. Porphyry, *De vita Plotini* 5, in Paul Henry and Hans-Rudolf Schwyzler, edd., *Plotini opera* (editio maior), three volumes (Brussels: Museum Lessianum, 1964–1973).

²¹ Plotinus, *Enneads* 2.9 in Henry and Schwyzler.

²² Benjamin Aporthorp Gould Fuller, *The Problem of Evil in Plotinus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), p. 2. B.A.G. Fuller (Brookline, Massachusetts, 19 March 1879–15 March 1956, Taxco, Mexico), whom friends described as “a representative of Epicureanism at its best,” was an exceptionally discerning reviewer of Plotinus. Also see Harold E. Remus, “Plotinus and Gnostic Thaumaturgy,” *Laval théologique et philosophique* 39.1 (1983), pp. 13–20; and Marju Lepajõe, “On the Demonology of Plotinus,” *Folklore* (Tartu) 9 (1998), pp. 7–16. “On the Demonology of Plotinus” is the translation of what Marju Lepajõe, who is a research-fellow at Tartu University, published, in Estonian, as “Plotinose demonoloogiat” in *Mäetagused* 8 (1998), pp. 7–14.

into the life of the spirit (*vie d'esperit*), a being that is beyond Reason and that is adapted to Love (*Amour, dame Amour, or dame Divine Amour*), the Virtues come to be in bondage to her. Although, by some, the *Mirror* could be understood as a text that marginalises virtue and, in so doing, marginalises ethics, it is quite likely that the meaning its author intended is consistent with the saving dictum, preserved in the gospel of Mark, that "the sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath."²³ If so, the Virtues, as they are treated in the *Mirror*, should not be regarded as ends in themselves.²⁴

In so far as Margaret emphasizes that the passage from bondage to freedom is such as to demand courage (*courage*) and that, in her attainment of freedom, while under the operations of divine justice (*divine droicture*), the soul is wise (*sage, saige*), it seems that hers is not a spirituality that displaces the cardinal virtues by which, during the European Middle Ages, the language of ethics was thoroughly informed.²⁵ The Virtues from which

²³ Mark 2.27–28.

²⁴ For Aristotle, the virtues operate both as means to an end and as ends in themselves. A fair summary of Aristotelian ethics can be found in Lee Ward, "Nobility and Necessity: The Problem of Courage in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*," *American Political Science Review* 95.1 (March 2001), pp. 71–83. There is, of course, no virtuous substitute for the reading and practice of such Aristotelian texts as *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Eudemian Ethics*, and *Magna moralia*.

²⁵ In the Latin west, the groundwork for discussing the cardinal virtues of *temperantia, fortitudo, prudentia*, and *iustitia*, received in speech from Greek tradition, was laid by Cicero, Augustine, and Boethius.

On temperance (*atrempance*), see *Mirror*, chapter 43: "This Soul, says Love, has long since seen and known that there is no wisdom so great as temperance, no riches so great as sufficiency, no power so great as love." ("Ceste Ame, dit Amour, a pieça veu et sceu que il n'est si grant sens comme d'atrempance, ne si grant richesse comme de souffissance, ne si grant force comme d'amour." [MS Chantilly, Musée Condé, F XIV 26, fol. 44r])

On courage (*courage*), see *Mirror*, chapter 118: "Now let no-one be dismayed at mounting higher; he shall not be dismayed if he has a great heart and is filled within with noble courage; but a little heart lacks the courage to undertake a great matter or to climb up higher, for lack of love." ("Or ne se esmaye nul de venir au plus hault; non fera, se il a le cueur gentil, et par dedans plain de noble courage; mais petit cueur n'ose grant chose entreprendre, ne hault monter par deffaulte d'amour." [MS Chantilly, Musée Condé, F XIV 26, fol. 96v])

On wisdom (*sapience*), see *Mirror*, chapter 40: "Love. I call this Soul supremely wise among those whom I have called, but a small wit is incapable of knowing a thing of great worth." ("<Amour.> Je appelle ceste Ame entre mes esleues surmontamment saige, mais petit sens ne scet priser ne cognoistre chose de digne value." [MS Chantilly, Musée Condé, F XIV 26, fol. 41r–41v])

On justice (*droicture*), see *Mirror*, chapter 52: "The Soul speaks of her beloved and says: He is, says this Soul, and does not lack this; and I am not, and so I know no lack. And he has given me peace, and I do not live except by peace, which is born in my soul of his

the soul must be liberated are, as Reason must acknowledge, both necessary for her perfection and necessary to be surpassed: "...without these Virtues no-one can be saved or attain to perfect living, and with them no-one can be deceived; and none the less this Soul takes leave of them."²⁶

The *Mirror* provides some discussion of the theological virtues of Christian cult and tradition, that is, of Faith (*Foy*), Hope (*Esperance*), and Charity (*Charité*); but, even if the theological virtues, like Reason, must make concessions to Love, the mission of the soul, on her way toward freedom, remains yet in agreement with Faith, with Hope, and with Charity.²⁷ In contrast, however, to other virtues, whether cardinal or theological, Reason and Dread (*Raison et Crainte*) are named as the virtues that are in partnership with the "tyrant-mistress Will" (*tonnerresse Voulenté*) and that are in league with bondage. It is not by them, but by Love and Faith, that life in freedom is defined.²⁸

Closely associated with Reason and Dread is Shame (*Vergoigne*), "the loveliest daughter that Humility has" (*la plus belle fille que Humilité ait*).²⁹ The common destiny of all three is to serve as "portresses" (*portieres*) at the dwelling (*hostel*) of the liberated Soul, who is "Lady of the Virtues, Daughter of the Deity, Sister of Wisdom and the Bride of Love" (*dame des Vertuz, fille de Deité, seur de Sapience, et espouse d'Amour*).³⁰ And, since

gifts, without any thought; and so I can do nothing if this be not given to me. This is my all and my better. Such a state of being makes one love and one will and one work to be in two natures. This is the power possessed by the bringing to nothing in union with divine justice." ("L'Ame parle de son amy et si dit ainsi: Il est, dit ceste Ame, ce ne luy fault mie; et je ne suis mie, et si ne me fault mie; et si m'a paix donnee et ne vifs sinon de paix, qui est nee de ses dons en mon ame, sans pensee; et si ne puis nient, se il ne m'est donné. C'est mon tout et mon meilleur. Et tel estre fait avoir une amour et ung vouloir et une oeuvre en deux natures. Tel povoir a l'adnientissement de l'unité de divine droicture." [MS Chantilly, Musée Condé, F XIV 26, fol. 49v])

All translations of the *Mirror* are from Edmund Colledge, O.S.A., J.C. Marler, and Judith Grant, trans., *The Mirror of Simple Souls* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999). The French, Latin, and Middle English texts of the *Mirror* may be consulted in Paul Verdeyen and Romana Guarnieri, edd., *Speculum simplicium animarum, Mirouer des simples âmes*. Corpus christianorum. Continuatio mediaevalis, vol. 69 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986). The French text is specified according to its foliation in MS Chantilly, Musée Condé, F XIV 26.

²⁶ *Mirror*, chapter 8: "...sans lesquelles Vertuz nul ne se peut saulver ne venir a perfection de vie, et qui les a ne peut <estre> deceu; et neantmoins ceste Ame prent congé a elles." [MS Chantilly, Musée Condé, F XIV 26, fol. 12v]

²⁷ About Faith, Hope, and Charity, especially see *Mirror*, chapter 19.

²⁸ *Mirror*, chapter 48.

²⁹ *Mirror*, chapter 65.

³⁰ *Mirror*, chapters 65 and 87.

Discretion (*Discrecion*), like Reason and like Dread, is able “to say nothing against Love” (*contre Amour rien dire*), there are grounds for believing that, in the *Mirror*, the virtues to which the soul is originally in bondage are at least four: Reason, Dread, Shame, and Discretion.³¹

Although, beyond Reason, Dread, Shame, and Discretion, Humility is said in the *Mirror* to be “of other Virtues, the mother” (*des aultres Vertuz la mere*), Humility is equivocal.³² The mother of Virtues is “the true and perfect humility” (*vraye humilité et parfaite*) by whom the soul is “brought to nothing” (*adnientie*); but she, as Love remarks, is “Not that Humility who is Humility through the work of the Virtues, for she is blood sister to Reason” (*Non mye celle Humilité qui est Humilité par oeuvre de Vertuz; car elle est seur germaine de Raison.*)³³ The sister of Reason is the same in name as the mother of Virtues but her works are of less value “for to be a mother is more important than to be a child” (*car c'est plus grant chose de mere que d'enfant*).³⁴

Of the Virtues coördinate with Reason, the *Mirror* furnishes no account sufficient to show exactly how or exactly why its author, or anyone else, would categorize them as virtues.³⁵ All that is claimed in the *Mirror* is that, “in acquiring virtues” (*en acquerant vertuz*), the “Soul who languishes for Love” (*Ame qui languist d'amour*) “makes war against vices” (*guerroye aux vices*).³⁶ The Virtues, therefore, are opposed to vices; but, if any of the Virtues coördinate with Reason are better than any vices, it would be best to know the reason why.

For Margaret Porette, the domain over which Reason holds sway is (1) the private realm in which a soul in bondage to the Virtues exercises her will and (2) the public realm of wilful souls that are institutionalised

³¹ *Mirror*, chapter 95: “... ne peut Crainte, ne Discrecion, ne Raison contre Amour rien dire.” [MS Chantilly, Musée Condé, F XIV 26, fol. 81v]

³² Thus the first stanza, in the *Mirror*, of the proem that precedes the prologue: “Vous qui en ce livre lirez, / Se bien le voulez entendre / Pensez ad ce que vous direz, / Car il est fort a comprendre; / Humilité vous fault prendre / Qui de Science est tresoriere / Et des aultres Vertuz la mere.” [MS Chantilly, Musée Condé, F XIV 26, fol. 6v]

³³ *Mirror*, chapters 11 and 88.

³⁴ *Mirror*, chapter 88

³⁵ Because, for example, good people do not do shameful things, shame (αἰδώς) is not a virtue (ἀρετή) but is merely an affection (πάθος) that indicates vice. That is the understanding of Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.9. And, from what is argued in *Nicomachean Ethics* 2.7, dread may be understood as the excess of fear (φόβος) that is the principle of cowardice (δουλια). The Christian *ethos*, however, differs importantly from that, as Aristotle would have understood, of the Athenians at Marathon.

³⁶ *Mirror*, chapter 44.

as “Holy Church the Less” (*Sainte Eglise la Petite*).³⁷ Because the Virtues coördinate with Reason are associated with the exercise of will, and thus with every such projection of self as must be an artefact of willing and as could hinder the operations of Love and perfect Humility, which are unconditionally better, it seems absolutely good for the soul to transcend those Virtues by making herself to be absolutely void of will.

The function of the Virtues coördinate with Reason, as they pertain to the will, is disciplinary; and, in the public realm, by the discipline she always brings to souls, it is Holy Church the Less that corresponds to the disciplinary Virtues. The soul that, in vacancy of will, has no need of any discipline also has no need of Holy Church the Less. Holy Church the Less, as Love herself declares, “is ruled by Reason” (*est gouvernee de Raison*) “who understands only the obvious and fails to grasp what is subtle” (*qui n’entend que le gros et laisse la subtilité*).³⁸ What the author of the *Mirror* appears to mean by *la subtilité* that Reason does not grasp is determined in “words of two meanings” (*doubles motz*), that is, by equivocation.³⁹ In the *Mirror*, a product of “the zeal of love and the labour of charity” (*jalousie d’amour et oeuvre de charité*), the difference between the “obvious” and the “subtle” is proved by equation of the “subtle” with a “spiritual sense” (*entendement espirituel*) that must be understood “divinely” (*divinement*) and that, far more often than not, is neither explicit nor explained.⁴⁰ But there is, in the *Mirror*, no assertion to the effect that the “obvious” must not be true.

Semantic disjunctions, like that which Paul of Tarsus had asserted, or inserted, between “the letter” (τὸ γὰρ γράμμα) that “kills” (ἀποκτείνει) and “the spirit” (τὸ πνεῦμα) that “produces life” (ζωοποιεῖ), are the ingredients of a tradition in hermeneutics that originated with the efforts of Greek antiquity to defend the texts of Homer.⁴¹ Heraclitus the Allegorist

³⁷ *Mirror*, chapter 19: “Voyre, Sainte Eglise la Petite, dit Amour; celle Eglise qui est gouvernee de Raison; et non mie Sainte Eglise la Grant, dit Divine Amour, qui est gouvernee par nous.” [MS Chantilly, Musée Condé, F XIV 26, fol. 25v–26r]

It was Hannah Arendt who, in *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), made the distinction between the “private realm” and the “public realm.” Heraclitus of Ephesus, it is likely, was the first to propose it.

³⁸ *Mirror*, chapter 8.

³⁹ *Mirror*, chapters 13 and 20.

⁴⁰ *Mirror*, chapters 58, 60, and 82.

⁴¹ 2 Corinthians 3.6: “... τὸ γὰρ γράμμα ἀποκτείνει, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ζωοποιεῖ.”

For Porphyry, whom Jerome took seriously in the field of *Textkritik*, the allegorical tradition began with the treatment that Theagenes of Rhegium had accorded to the Homeric

(*fl.* 1st century BC) thus opined, as concerning Homer, that “if he did not allegorize” (εἰ μὴδὲν ἡλληγόρησεν) then “he was thoroughly impious” (πάντως . . . ἡσέβησεν).⁴² Allegory, as it may appear, occurred to the Greeks as a device by which to preserve an archaic text the evident meanings of which, over the course of time, had become so unseemly as to make it dispensable.

It was Plutarch who noted that allegories (ἀλληγορίαι) were formerly called “hidden meanings” (ὑπόνοιαι) or, anglicised perhaps more literally, as Andrew Ford has suggested, “under-meanings.”⁴³

The etymology of *huponoia* suggests a rather intellectualist and even text-based conception of poetic meaning: *hupo-* puts the meaning in a depth and thus implies a surface, and the root *-noia* is the most important fifth-century word for “thought” as intellection and calculation rather than mere perception or recognition. *Huponoia* is thus a good name for implicit philosophical or ethical theses that may be derived from a poem in the course of a sophistic discussion. Allegories belong to the class of *huponoiai* because *huponoiai* were by definition subtle and unapparent meanings. The term demarcated economic and social distinctions more precisely than rhetorical ones: in pointing out the noble thoughts the poet intended (*dianoiai*), rhapsodes could win crowns and prizes from poetic guilds or state festivals; sophists, on the other hand, could sell to select students at considerable prices the unexpected *huponoiai* known only to a few.⁴⁴

The “fifth century” to which Ford refers was, in Athens, the era of Socrates whose voice Plato would claim in service to an argument that, by subordinating rhetoric to ethics, proscribed the use of ὑπόνοιαι. The reason why, as is said in *Republic* II, is that “a youngster is not able to judge what is ὑπόνοια and what is not; but, being at that age, what he takes into his

texts. Jonathan Tate, however, discussing Celsus as excerpted by Origen, believed that it was Pherecydes of Syros who was the first to read Homer allegorically. See Jonathan Tate, “The Beginnings of Greek Allegory,” *The Classical Review* 41.6 (December 1927), pp. 214–215. Although the argument of Tate has been the object of some criticism, what Celsus said is unambiguous. It is in *Ecclesiastical History* 6.19.1–12 that Eusebius mentions what Porphyry recalled about Origen.

⁴² See Eugen Mehler, ed., *Heracliti allegoriae homericae* (Leiden: Brill, 1851), chapter 1.

⁴³ Plutarch, *De audiendis poetis* 4.19 in Johann Friedrich Dübner (Höselgau bei Gotha, 21 December 1802–13 October 1867, Paris), ed., *Plutarchi Chaeronensis scripta moralia graece et latine* (Paris: Ambrose Firmin Didot, 1866–1868), two volumes.

⁴⁴ Andrew Ford, “Early Allegorical Exegesis of Homer,” in Margaret Beissinger, Jane Tylus, and Susanne Wofford, ed., *Epic Traditions in the Contemporary World: The Poetics of Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 39.

opinions tends to become difficult to wash out and to be unchanging.”⁴⁵ Thus are the immature, whether as readers or as auditors, likely to be misled and, in the process, to be habituated to false beliefs. And thus too, in the use of beguiling language, may be the “hazard of moral evil” that Margaret Porette and, like her, Meister Eckhart thought it best to disregard.⁴⁶

In the narrative of the *Mirror*, Holy Church the Less, who is in thrall to the “custom of Reason” (*usage de raison*), is subordinate to Holy Church the Great (*Sainte Eglise la Grant*), who is governed by Love.⁴⁷ The most distinctive feature of Holy Church the Less is that, under the structures and strictures of Reason, her communicants do not understand “this word” (*ceste parole*) to which, through the *Mirror*, Love gives voice and that “surpasses” (*seurmoute*) the “writings” (*escriptures*) from which they were previously instructed.⁴⁸ The fellowship of Holy Church the Less, according to its want of understanding, includes theologians (*theologiens*), scholars (*clers*), priests (*prestres*), and the religious (*gens de religion*), that is, the Dominicans (*prescheurs*), Augustinians (*Augustins*), the Carmelites (*carmes*), and the Friars Minor (*les freres mineurs*). She also includes the Beguines.⁴⁹ Holy Church the Less, it seems fair to remark, is dominated by professionals of whom, in the order of professions, some are more professional than others. Since, however, Holy Church the Less is the realm of Soul, not the better locale of Spirit, she embraces “all those who live in the life of grace through the fulfilment of the commandments, and who permit themselves to be content with this” (*tous ceulx qui vivent en vie*

⁴⁵ Plato, Republic 2.378d–e: ὁ γὰρ νέος οὐχ οἷος τε κρίνειν ὅτι τε ὑπόνοια καὶ ὁ μὴ, ἀλλ’ ἃ ἂν τηλικούτος ὦν λάβῃ ἐν ταῖς δόξαις δυσέκνιπτά τε καὶ ἀμετάστατα φιλεῖ γίγνεσθαι. [John Burnet, ed., *Platonis opera*, five volumes, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1900–1907)]

⁴⁶ The contemporary language of “moral hazard” is, among speakers of English, at least as old as the sermon of John Abernethy, “The Principal Objections Against the Goodness of God Answered,” printed in his *Discourses Concerning the [Being and Natural] Perfections of God*, two volumes (Dublin: Richard Reilly, 1760–1762), vol. 1, pp. 137–138:

Would not one who considers the privileges of our nature, and the various enjoyment which belongs to the general condition of men, together with that measure of perfection and felicity which we have in prospect, if we duly use our own powers and improve our opportunities, even though it be accompanied with the hazard of moral evil and unhappiness, which is only to be incurred by our own fault, but may be avoided if we are not wanting to ourselves, and we may reasonably hope, from the goodness of God, for all necessary assistance in order to it; would not, I say, one think this state in the whole preferable to non-existence?

⁴⁷ *Mirror*, chapters 19 and 122.

⁴⁸ *Mirror*, chapter 41.

⁴⁹ *Mirror*, proem and chapter 122.

de grace par l'acomplissent des commendements, et se laissent en ce avoir souffisance).⁵⁰ Holy Church the Less, therefore, is nurse to a multitude of "asses" (*asnes*) who "think that God is subject to his sacraments and to his works" (*tiennent que Dieu soit subiect a ses sacramens et a ses oeuvres*).⁵¹ The *argumentum ad hominem*, of course, is abusive.

Holy Church the Great, in which Love prevails, is not symbolized in opposition to Holy Church the Less.⁵² What she has transcended, she does not yet remove. Holy Church the Great is the district of freedom where the soul, on its way to the will of God, is progressively spiritualised through further grades of transcendence that are called "beings" (*estres*).⁵³ The grades of transcendence, or "beings," are "states" (*estaz*) the number of which is seven.⁵⁴ Of the seven, the initial, the antepenultimate, the penultimate, and the ultimate are philosophically decisive.

The first state, as "in the life of grace through the fulfilment of the commandments," maintains proximity to Holy Church the Less:

The first state, or step, is when the Soul which is touched by God's grace and stripped bare of sin, so far as is in its power, has the intention of keeping for life, that is, until death, the commandments of God, which he commands in the Law. And so this Soul considers and ponders with great fear that God has commanded her to love him with all her heart, and her neighbor also as herself.⁵⁵

Grace, at this stage, is concurrent with such absolution (*touchee par grace et desnuee a son pouvoir de peché*) as the Soul may obtain without the agencies of priestcraft and as is appropriate to the intention (*entencion*) of adhering to what the Law (*la Loy*) requires, especially to the two great

⁵⁰ *Mirror*, chapter 72.

⁵¹ *Mirror*, chapters 68, 69, and 103.

⁵² *Mirror*, chapter 43: "...telles Ames sont en vie dessus nous, car Amour demoure en elles et Raison demoure en nous; mais ce n'est mie contre nous, dit Sainte Eglise la Petite..." [MS Chantilly, Musée Condé, F XIV 26, fol. 43r]

⁵³ *Mirror*, chapter 118.

⁵⁴ *Mirror*, chapter 118.

⁵⁵ *Mirror*, chapter 118: "Le premier estat, ou degré, est que l'Ame, qui est de Dieu touchee par grace et desnuee a son pouvoir de peché, a entencion de garder sur sa vie, c'est a dire pour mourir, les commandemens de Dieu, qu'il commande en la Loy. Et pource regarde et considere ceste Ame, par grant crainte, que Dieu luy a commandé a l'aymer de tout son cueur, et aussi son proesme comme soy mesmes." [MS Chantilly, Musée Condé, F XIV 26, fol. 96r]

commandments of Matthew 22 and Luke 10.⁵⁶ The intention is for the life of the Soul *pour mourir*.⁵⁷

The fifth state, the antepenultimate, “is when the Soul considers that God is he who is, of whom all things are, and that she is not, and that it is not from her that all things are.” (*...est que l'Ame regarde que Dieu est, qui est dont toute chose est, et elle n'est mie, si n'est dont toute chose est.*)⁵⁸ This is the “being” in which “there is no will, and the Soul remains there after the work performed by the Far-Near of Rapture whom we term lighting from its manner of opening and rapid closing...” (*...n'a point de volonté—ou l'Ame demeure après l'oeuvre du Loingprès Ravissable que nous appellons esclar a maniere de ouverture et de hastive closure....*)⁵⁹ It is in the fifth state that the Soul, upon the annihilation of her will, is “brought to nothing” (*adnientie*).⁶⁰

What Margaret Porette, who described herself as a “mendicant creature” (*mendiant creature*),⁶¹ says about the fifth state refers to the equating of perfection and poverty that, as she had understood from the gospel of Luke, Jesus himself had taught as the fulfilment of the Virtues:

“There is one thing which you must do if you wish to be perfect. That is, go and sell everything that you have and give it to the poor, and then follow me, and you will have treasure in heaven.” That is the counsel of the highest perfection of the virtues, and whoever kept it would abide in true charity.⁶²

⁵⁶ In the edition of Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (Jacobus Faber Stapulensis), the text from Matthew 22 reads as follows: “Tu aymeras ton seigneur Dieu de tout ton cuer, et de toute ton ame, et de toute ta pensée. Cestuy est le plus grant, et le premier commandement. Et le second est semblable à iceluy: tu aymeras ton prochain comme toy mesmes. En ces deux commandemens depend toute la loy et les prophetes.” The passage from Luke 10 is given as: “Tu aymeras ton seigneur Dieu de tout ton cuer, et de toute ton ame et de toute ta force, et de toute ta pensée, et ton prochain comme toy mesmes.”

The printed copy of the New Testament, herein consulted, of Lefèvre d'Étaples is listed as Res A-6414 among the holdings, in Paris, of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Réserve des livres rares. Simon de Colines published the first volume, in Paris, on 31 October 1523; and he issued the second volume on 6 November. At the end of the first volume, Marie de Fleury (1661–1692), the sister of Cardinal André Hercule de Fleury (“Son Éternité”), left her signature.

⁵⁷ 1 Corinthians 15: “Et au dernier: la mort ennemie sera destruite.” [Lefèvre d'Étaples]

⁵⁸ *Mirror*, chapter 118.

⁵⁹ *Mirror*, chapter 58.

⁶⁰ In the *Mirror*, the title and topic of chapter 58 is “Comment les Ames Adnienties sont ou cinquiesme estat avec leur amy.” [MS Chantilly, Musée Condé, F XIV 26, fol. 53r]

⁶¹ *Mirror*, chapter 96.

⁶² *Mirror*, chapter 3: “Une chouse te fault faire, se tu vieulx estre parfait. C'est: va et vens toutes les chouses que tu as et les donne aux puvres, et puis si m'ensuis, et tu auras tresor es cyelx.' C'est le conseil de toute perfection des vertus, et qui bien le tendroit il demoureroit en vraye charité.” [MS Chantilly, Musée Condé, F XIV 26, fol. 9v] Margaret is

In the emptiness created by the absence of her will, the soul is spiritually impoverished; and, lacking even the will to affirm the will of God, she has nothing of her own that stands in the way of her being overwhelmed completely by the loving divinity who had reduced her to nothing. As Professor Colledge and I have argued, in furtherance of the scholarship of Herbert Grundmann and Josef Koch, the unconditional loss of will, and thus also of any will to be in agreement with the divine will, is the point of consistency between chapter 48 of the *Mirror* and what Meister Eckhart expounded in *Predigt 52: Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum*:

... a man is poor who does not want to fulfil God's will, but who lives so that he may be free both of his own will and of God's will, as he was when he was not.⁶³

Between the *Mirror* and *Predigt 52*, it was Ruusbroec who perceived the troubling resemblance and it was our scrutiny of his argument in the *XII beghinen* that furnished impulse to our view that, in suggesting Eckhart to have read and retained something of what Margaret herself had written, Grundmann and Koch were correct.⁶⁴ Eckhart, to be sure, was not the *fidelissimus discipulus* of Margaret Porette; but it is, in the *Mirror*, upon the account of the "fifth state" that *Predigt 52* reverts.⁶⁵

In 1982, Professor Colledge and I had argued, on the grounds of what we understood to be the autograph of Meister Eckhart in MS Soest, Stad-tarchiv 33, that *Predigt 52* was composed at some time between late 1326 and the spring of 1327, that is, a fraction more than sixteen years after the condemnation and death of Margaret Porette.⁶⁶ Professor Kurt Ruh believed that it was Godfrey of Fontaines who had first drawn the

referring to Luke 18: "Il te fault encore une chose. Vendz tout ce que tu as et le donne aux pources: et tu auras ung tresor au ciel et viens ensuis moy." [Lefèvre d'Étaples]

⁶³ Meister Eckhart, *Predigt 52*, in Josef Quint, ed., *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen Werke*, Band 2: *Meister Eckharts Predigten* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1971), p. 499: "... daz sî ein arm mensche, der niht enwîl ervûllen den willen gotes, mêr: daz der mensche alsô lebe, daz er alsô ledic sî beidiu sînes eigenen willen und des willen gotes, als er was, dô er niht enwas."

⁶⁴ Colledge and Marler (1984), pp. 15–18.

⁶⁵ It was Tolomeo of Lucca who said that Peter of Auvergne was the *fidelissimus discipulus* of Thomas Aquinas. See Antoine Dondaine, "Les *Opuscula fratris Thomae* chez Ptolémée de Lucques," *Archivum fratrum praedicatorum* 31 (1961), p. 152: "Scripsit etiam super physicam, et super de celo, et super de generatione sed non complevit, et similiter politicam sed hos libros complevit magister Petri de Alvernia fidelissimus discipulus eius."

⁶⁶ Edmund Colledge, O.S.A., and J.C. Marler, "A Meister Eckhart Autograph?" *Scriptorium* 36 (1982), pp. 90–95.

attention of Meister Eckhart to the *Mirror* and its author.⁶⁷ If so, it may well be conjectured that Eckhart had some knowledge of the *Mirror* as early as 1308.

Since Eckhart, in his office and capacity as the provincial of Saxony, appears to have attended the Dominican General Chapter, which was convened as a meeting of provincials who, on 7 June 1310, were gathered in Piacenza and which was the occasion for his submitting a report on his activities in the Province of Bohemia where he was vicar general, it is most unlikely that he could have been in Paris when Margaret suffered and died in the Place de Grève.⁶⁸ From Paris to Piacenza, the distance by modern road is about 920 kilometres. In the late Middle Ages, the rate of travel for pilgrims throughout Europe was certainly not more than twenty kilometres per day; and, with the allowance of stops each Sunday for devout observances, it is improbable that a friar in transit from Paris to Piacenza on the muddy highways, meandering trails, and mountain passes of the fourteenth century would have been able to complete the journey, even in the fairest weather, in any time less than fifty-three days.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Kurt Ruh, *Meister Eckhart: Theologe, Prediger, Mystiker* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1985), p. 104. Ruh, who was born on 5 May 1914 in Neuhausen am Rheinfl, died in Würzburg on 8 December 2002.

⁶⁸ Professor Winfried Corduan, in "The Gospel According to Margaret," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 35.4 (December 1992), p. 515, suggested that Meister Eckhart may have been among the spectators who witnessed the burning of Margaret Porette.

Concerning Eckhart and the General Chapter at Piacenza, see what Jacques Quéatif, O.P. (Paris, 1618–2 March 1698, Paris), and Jacques Échard, O.P. (Rouen, 22 September 1644–15 March 1724, Paris), preserved in the first volume of *Scriptores ordinis praedicatorum recensiti notisque historicis et criticis illustrati*, two volumes (Paris: J.-B.-C. Ballard and N. Simart, 1719–1721): reprinted in Turin: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1961). Also see Benedikt Maria Reichert, O.P., *Acta capitulorum generalium ordinis praedicatorum*, three volumes (Rome: Typographia polyglotta sacrae congregationis de propaganda fidei, 1898–1900), vol. 2, p. 49.

⁶⁹ About rates of travel by field and stream during the Middle Ages in Europe, see Frank Jewett Mather, Jr., "An Inedited Document Concerning Chaucer's First Italian Journey," *Modern Language Notes* 11.7 (November 1896), pp. 210–213 and "On the Asserted Meeting of Chaucer and Petrarch," *Modern Language Notes* 12.1 (January 1897), pp. 1–11. Also see Jean Adrien Antoine Jules Jusserand, *Les Anglais au Moyen Âge: la vie nomade et les routes d'Angleterre au XIV^e siècle* (Paris: Librairie Hatchette, 1884) and the English translation by Lucy Toulmin Smith that Jusserand himself enlarged and that was published as *English Wayfaring in the Middle Ages (XIVth Century)* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1921). Especially to be consulted is *Information for Pilgrims unto the Holy Land*, the collection of itineraries that issued from the press of Wynkyn de Worde in 1498 (Westminster), 1515 (London), and 1524 (London) and that Edward Gordon Duff-in keeping with his character-edited to perfection. Lawrence and Bullen, in London, published a limited edition of this work in 1893.

If, by Godfrey of Fontaines, Eckhart had not already been made acquainted with the *Mirror*, he could have read the document in French, a language with which he had been familiar since 1286, after his arrival in Paris in 1311. Until departing for Strasbourg in 1313, he and William Humbert were both in residence at Saint Jacques where all copies of the *Mirror* were supposed to have been deposited in care of the inquisitor and the prior.⁷⁰ Humbert is known to have died in 1314, not surviving past 28 November.⁷¹

On the platform of research that Professor Ruh has constructed and published, it may be understood that Meister Eckhart assimilated the symbols and themes of Margaret Porette to a theological outlook more substantial, and perhaps closer to orthodoxy, than what is embodied in the text of the *Mirror*.⁷² However, apart from the *Mirror*, *Predigt 52* gives expression to the theology of "the God beyond God" and thus to a metaphysical thesis that, in the Neoplatonism of late antiquity, corresponds to "the One beyond the One" of Damascius, the last of the Platonic *diadochoi*.⁷³ To the degree that the experience and symbol of "the God

⁷⁰ That copies of the *Mirror* were to be found at Saint Jacques must have been a result of the decree of William Humbert: "... universis et singulis habentibus dictum librum precipientes districte et sub pena excommunicationis quod infra instans festum apostolorum Petri et Pauli nobis vel priori fratrum predicatorum Parisius, nostro commissario, sine fraude reddere teneantur." [Frédéricq, *Corpus documentorum* I, page 159] Humbert, as it would seem, had reason to think that the *Mirror* was in circulation—*districte*—far afield from Valenciennes.

⁷¹ About William Humbert, also called "William of Paris," see Walter Senner, O.P., (Pontificia Università San Tommaso d'Aquino), "Wilhelm von Paris," in Robert Auty et al., edds., *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, nine volumes (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch, 2003), vol. 9, p. 182.

⁷² Thus Ruh, page 104: "...formuliere ich eine doppelte These: 1. Eckhart hat den 'Miroir' der Marguerite Porete, in welcher Form auch immer, gekannt. 2. Er hat entscheidene Aussagen dieses Buches—die seinen eigenen Vorstellungen entsprachen oder entgegenkamen—aufgegriffen und ihnen, seiner Meinung nach, eine präzisere, theologisch vertretbare Formulierung gegeben."

⁷³ About the theology of *Predigt 52*, see Colledge and Marler (1984). For the theology of Damascius, who died in Egypt some time after AD 538, see Charles-Émile Ruelle, ed., *Damascii successoris dubitationes et solutiones de primis principiis, in Platonis Parmenidem*, two volumes (Paris: Charles Klincksieck, 1889). Of this work, see the translation by Anthelme Édouard Chaignet that was published as *Problèmes et solutions touchant les premiers principes avec le tableau sommaire des doctrines des Chaldéens de Michel Psellus*, three volumes (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1898). Also informative are John Dillon, "Damascius on the Ineffable," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 78 (1996), pp. 120-9; Sara Rappe, "Scepticism in the Sixth Century? Damascius' Doubts and Solutions Concerning First Principles," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 36.3 (July 1998), pp. 337-363; and Raoul Mortley, *From Word to Silence, I: The Rise and Fall of Logos and II: The Way of Negation, Christian and Greek*. Theophrastus 30 und 31: Beiträge zur Religions- und Kirchengeschichte des

beyond God" is cognate with the proposition that "...in God there is no real relation to creatures, but in creatures there is a real relation to God...", the theological vision of Eckhart should be thought, in the end, to be more consistent with that of Thomas Aquinas than with the perspective schematized in the *Mirror*.⁷⁴

What the *Mirror* teaches, in the "fifth state," on experiential grounds, is that volition can be transcended and, in so doing, it denies the Augustinian thesis, for which considerable argument is given in *De libero arbitrio uoluntatis*, that the will is inescapable, a proposition that, at the forefront of modernity, Friedrich Nietzsche was not by any means willing to dispute: *lieber will noch der Mensch das Nichts wollen, als nicht wollen*.⁷⁵

The sixth state, the penultimate, is that of the "Illumining of God" (*Clari-ficement de Dieu*)⁷⁶ in which the Soul so completely reflects the "divine majesty" by which, or by whom, she herself is seen that she perceives no difference between herself and divinity:

Altertums (Bonn: Hanstein, 1986), volume two, chapter seven, "Damascius and Hyper-ignorance," pp. 119–127.

David Chidester, in the treatment he accords to Magaret Porette and Meister Eckhart in *Christianity: A Global History* (New York: HarperOne, 2000), emphasizes most strongly the symbol of "God Beyond God" as a point of distinction.

⁷⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I.28.1. ad 3: "...in Deo non est realis relatio ad creaturas, sed in creaturis est realis relatio ad Deum..."

Marinus was the teacher of Damascius; and Proclus was the teacher of Marinus. Thomas, in *De substantiis separatis*, is most emphatic about his regard for Proclus, at least in the domain of metaphysics, as being much superior to Aristotle. In *De substantiis separatis*, it is evident that, as a metaphysician, Thomas numbers himself—with only a few qualifications—among the *Platonici*. Yves Marie-Joseph Congar, O.P., in some paragraphs appended only to the English translation of what he had originally published as "Saint Thomas: serviteur de la Vérité," in *La vie spirituelle* 19.210 (March 1937), pp. 259–279, proposed 2 October 1272 as the date on which Thomas began the writing of *De substantiis separatis*, a work left unfinished at the death of its author on 7 March 1274. The argument for this date, which Congar furnished in "St. Thomas: Servant of the Truth" in A. Manson and L.C. Sheppard, trans., *Faith and Spiritual Life* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), pp. 67–85, is most attractive.

That Meister Eckhart and Thomas Aquinas both belong to the tradition of Latin Neoplatonism, there can be no doubt.

⁷⁵ Augustine argues, in *De libero arbitrio uoluntatis* 3.7–8, that to will not to be and, in so doing, to will to have no will is to will a contradiction. The Augustinian argument against the rationality of suicide may be used thus to some effect against the annihilating spirituality that is commended in the *Mirror* and in *Predigt* 52. It is, in practice as well as in theory, impossible to will a contradiction.

The dictum of Nietzsche that "man would rather will the void than to be void of will" is the last sentence in *Zur Genealogie der Moral: Eine Streitschrift* (Leipzig: C.G. Naumann, 1887).

⁷⁶ *Mirror*, chapter 91.

The sixth state is when the Soul does not see herself at all, whatever the abyss of humility she has within herself, nor does she see God, whatever the exalted goodness he has. But God of his divine majesty sees himself in her, and by him this Soul is so illumined that she cannot see that anyone exists, except only God himself; and so she sees nothing except herself for whoever sees that which is sees nothing except God himself, who sees himself in this very Soul by his divine majesty.⁷⁷

Although the “sixth state,” of which spiritual poverty, the “fifth state,” is only the anticipation, is the proximate goal of the states that are spiritually earlier, its realisation, however frequent or not, is only for a moment:

The Soul . . . is neither lost nor forlorn but rather is in rapture with her lover in the fifth state of being. There she does not falter; indeed, often she is rapt up into the sixth state, but this does not last with her for long. For it is an opening swift as a lightning flash and a rapid closing in which one cannot remain for long, nor could she ever have a teacher able to speak of this.⁷⁸

From the “sixth state,” which is beyond words and, therefore, beyond teaching, the illuminated soul returns to the fifth:

. . . because in the fifth state, of which this book speaks, there is no will, and the Soul remains there after the work performed by the Far-Near of Rapture whom we term lightning from its manner of opening and rapid closing, no-one could believe, says Love, the peace upon peace of all peace which such a Soul receives, if he himself was not so.

Understand these words in a spiritual sense, for Love's sake, hearers of this book! This Far-Near, whom we call lightning from its manner of opening and rapid closing, takes the Soul from the fifth state and places her in the sixth, for so long as its work lasts and remains, and so her state is changed; but the life of this sixth state does not last long in her, for she is set back, down into the fifth. And this is no wonder, says Love, for the work of the lightning, so long as it lasts, is nothing else than the manifestation of the

⁷⁷ *Mirror*, chapter 118: “Le siziesme estat est, que l'Ame ne se voit point, pour quelconque abysme d'umilité que elle ait en elle; ne Dieu, pour quelconque haultiesme bonté qu'il ait. Mais Dieu se voit en elle de sa majesté divine, qui clarifie de luy ceste Ame, si que elle ne voit que nul soit, fors Dieu mesmes, qui est, dont toute chose est; et ce qui est, c'est Dieu mesmes; et pource ne voit elle sinon elle mesmes; car qui voit ce qui est, il ne voit fors Dieu mesmes, qui se voit en ceste Ame mesmes, de sa majesté divine.” [MS Chantilly, Musée Condé, F XIV 26, fol. 100r]

⁷⁸ *Mirror*, chapter 58: “Ceste Ame . . . n'est perie ne marrie. Ainçois est en esbouts ou cinquesme estat avec son amant. La ne fault elle mie, et si est souvent ou siziesme ravie, mais pou ce luy dure. Car <c'est> une ouverture a maniere de esclar et de hastive closure, ou l'en ne peut longuement demourer, ne elle n'eust oncques mere, qui de ce sceust parler.” [MS Chantilly, Musée Condé, F XIV 26, fol. 53r–53v]

Soul's glory. This does not last long in any creature, but only for the time of its passage.⁷⁹

The reason why the soul, though altogether spiritualised and enlightened, cannot always remain in the "sixth state" is her companionship with the "sinful body;" and it is the fluctuation of the soul between the fifth and sixth states that explains the parable, itself narrated in the *Mirror* as a result of popular confusion about the scriptures, of the "just man" who fell and was raised seven times a day:

Since the just man falls seven times a day, he must be raised up seven times, or else he could not fall again seven times. He is blessed who often falls so, for it follows that he falls indeed from that state to which no-one attains if he has no good title to the name of just; but yet more blessed is he who always remains there. No-one can always be there, so long as his soul is accompanied by this sinful body in this world; but such falling does not make the Soul lose her peace through reproaches or remorse of conscience, and prevent her from living in peace by the gifts which are given to her over and above the Virtues—not against the Virtues, but above them.⁸⁰

The soul that does not "lose her peace through reproaches or remorse of conscience" seems not to revert to the human condition of enthrallment to the Virtues and thus of moral dependence on human institutions, especially as these may be symbolized in Holy Church the Less.

⁷⁹ *Mirror*, chapter 58: "Et pource que ou cinquiesme estat, dont ce livre parle, n'a point de voulement—ou l'Ame demoure après l'oeuvre du Loingprés Ravissable que nous appellons esclar a maniere de ouverture et de hastive closure,—nul ne pouroit croire, dit Amour, la paix sur paix que telle Ame reçoit, se ce n'estoit il mesmes. "Entendez ces motz divinement, par amour, auditeurs de ce livre! Ce Loingprés, que nous appellons esclar a maniere d'ouverture et de hastive closure, prent l'Ame ou cinquiesme estat et la met ou siziesme, tant comme son oeuvre demoure et dure, et ainsi est aultre; mais pou luy dure l'estre de ce siziesme, car elle est remise ou cinquiesme.

"Et ce n'est pas merveilles, dit Amour, car l'oeuvre de l'esclar, tant comme elle dure, n'est aultre chose que la demonstrence de la gloire de l'Ame. Ce ne demoure en nulle creature longuement, sinon seulement en l'espace de son mouvement." [MS Chantilly, Musée Condé, F XIV 26, fol. 53v–54r]

⁸⁰ *Mirror*, chapter 105: "Puisque le juste chet sept foiz le jour, donc convient il qu'il soit elevé sept foiz, ou il ne pourroit decheoir sept foiz. Celluy est beneurez, qui souvent en chet, car il se ensuit qu'il en viengne, voire, de la ou nul ne vait, se il n'a a bon droit le nom de juste; mais pourtant plus eurez est celluy qui tousjours y demoure. Nul n'y peut tousdis estre, tant comme l'ame est acompaignee de ce meschant corps en ce monde; mais celle cheue ne fait mie perdre paix par reprennement ou remors de conscience, que l'Ame ne vive de paix des dons qui luy sont donnez par dessus les Vertuz,—non mye contre les Vertuz, mais dessus." [MS Chantilly, Musée Condé, F XIV 26, fol. 87r–87v]

This is the popular conflation of Proverbs 24.16 with Psalm 119.164.

The “sixth state,” about which it may be supposed that nothing can be said, is the instantaneous “manifestation” of the seventh “state of grace” (*estat de grace*), the ultimate, “in which state the Soul has the fullness of her perfection through her enjoyment of God in the land of life.”⁸¹

...the sixth is glorious, for the opening of the sweet movement of glory, which the noble Far-Near gives, is nothing else than a manifestation which God wishes the Soul to have of her own glory which she will have forever. And therefore in his goodness he gives her in the sixth state this manifestation of the seventh. This manifestation is born of the seventh state, which gives the sixth state. This manifestation is given so swiftly that the very one to whom it is given has no perception of the gift which is given to her.⁸²

“Glorification,” in the “seventh state,” far exceeds the “illumination” that occurs in the sixth and, according to the plainest language of the *Mirror*, it can only be realised in grace after death:

...this Soul in the sixth state is made free of all things and pure and illumined, yet not glorified, for glorification is of the seventh state, and that we shall have in glory, of which no-one is able to speak.⁸³

And the seventh state Love keeps within itself, to give to us in everlasting glory, of which we shall have no knowledge until our souls shall have left our bodies.⁸⁴

For that which the soul “shall have in glory,” which is “everlasting” and not only for the moment only, her release from a “sinful body” is the necessary condition. Whether, in preparation for “glory,” the sacrament of penance may also be necessary is neither affirmed nor denied; but, as may gathered from the words of Love, the soul who is “supremely free” incurs no blame for marginalising the sacraments:

⁸¹ *Mirror*, prologue: ...ouquel estat l'Ame a le plain de sa perfection par divine fruicion ou pais de vie.” [MS Chantilly, Musée Condé, F XIV 26, fol. 8r]

⁸² *Mirror*, chapter 61: “... le siziesme est glorieux, car l'ouverture du doulx mouvement de gloire, que le gentil Longprés donne, n'est aultre chose que une apparicion, que Dieu veult que l'Ame ait de sa gloire mesmes, que elle aura sans fin. Et pource luy fait de sa bonté ceste demonstrance du setiesme estat ou siziesme. Laquelle demonstrance naist du septiesme estat, qui donne le siziesme estre. Laquelle demonstrance est si tost donnee, que celle mesmes, a qui ce est donné, n'a de son don, qui est donné, nulle apparence.” [MS Chantilly, Musée Condé, F XIV 26, fol. 56r]

⁸³ *Mirror*, chapter 118: “...est l'Ame ou siziesme estat de toutes choses enfranchie et pure et clariffiee,—et non mie gloriffiee; car le glorifiement est ou septiesme estat, que nous aurons en gloire, dont nul ne sçait parler.” [MS Chantilly, Musée Condé, F XIV 26, fol. 100r]

⁸⁴ *Mirror*, chapter 118: “Et le septiesme garde Amour dedans elle, pour nous donner en parmanable gloire, duquel nous n'aurons cognoissance jusques ad ce que nostre ame ait nostre corps laissé.” [MS Chantilly, Musée Condé, F XIV 26, fol. 100v]

This Soul, says Love, is free, and yet more free, and yet very free, and yet supremely free, in root and stems and every branch, and in every fruit of her branches. This Soul has her portion of perfect freedom, and her every side has its full measure. She replies to no-one, if she does not wish, if he is not of her kin, for a man of noble birth would not deign to reply to a churl if he challenged him or sought him out on the battlefield; and therefore no-one who challenges such a Soul finds her. No more do her enemies have reply from her.⁸⁵

This Soul, says Love, is flayed by mortification, and burned by the ardor of the fire of charity, and her ashes are strewn by the nothingness of her will upon the high seas. In prosperity she has the nobility of the well-born, in adversity the nobility of one exalted, in all places, whatever they be, the nobility of the excellent. She who is such no longer seeks God through penance or through any sacrament of Holy Church, not through reflections or words or works, not through any creature here below or through any creature there above, not through justice or mercy or the glory of glories, not through divine knowledge or divine love or divine praise.⁸⁶

Thus, to the soul that is free, it must be churlish to address questions that, because only churls would ask questions, she will not condescend to answer. And, for the soul who is so spiritualised that she does not even question herself, confession, contrition, absolution, and penance must seem completely optional, if not completely useless.

Although the opinion of Professor Robert Lerner, to the effect that Margaret Porette, who refers to herself as the soul who wrote the *Mirror*, and its prescriptions, as the instrument of Love, “was probably a heretic” may well be true, the superbrutish response of the inquisition, and of the “secular justice” that followed, is no disproof of anything at all that is stated in the *Mirror*. To the extent, never the less, that the *Mirror* exhibits spirituality as a way of life that any of the virtues do not encompass and

⁸⁵ *Mirror*, chapter 85: “Ceste Ame, dit Amour, est franche, mais plus franche, mais tres franche, mais surmontamment franche, et de plante et de stocs et de toutes ses branches, et de tous les fruiz de ses branches. Ceste Ame a son lot de franchise affinee, checun costé en a sa plaine pinte. Elle ne respont a nully, se elle ne veult, se il n'est de son lignage; car ung gentilhomme ne daigneroit respondre a ung vilain, se il l'appelloit ou requeroit de champ de bataille; et pource ne trouve telle Ame qui l'appelle: ses ennemis n'ont plus d'elle response.” [MS Chantilly, Musée Condé, F XIV 26, fol. 74r]

⁸⁶ *Mirror*, chapter 85: Ceste Ame, dit Amour, est escorchée par mortification, et arse par l'ardour du feu de charité, et la pouldre d'elle gittee en haulte mer par nient de voullenté. Ceste est gentilement noble en prosperité, et haultement noble en adversité, et excellentement noble en tous lieux, quelx qu'ilz soient. Ceste, qui telle est, ne quiert plus Dieu par penitance ne par sacrement nul de Sainte Eglise, ne par pensees ne par paroles ne par oeuvres, ne par creature d'ycy bas ne par creature de lassus, ne par justice ne par misericorde ne par gloire de gloire, ne par divine cognoissance ne par divine amour ne par divine louenge. [MS Chantilly, Musée Condé, F XIV 26, fol. 74r-74v]

that, as a result, may seem to fall outside the scope of ethics, the uncritical reader, or auditor, is likely to infer that it must be better to be spiritual than it is to be good, a sophism the logic of which always refutes itself. For anyone entrusted with the care of souls, the effect of pious sophistries, especially on simple souls, is nothing to be ignored.

PART THREE

INTRODUCTION TO PART THREE

Jeremiah Hackett

It is now 45 years since Ingeborg Degenhart's work on the reception of Eckhart, *Studien zum Wandel des Eckhartbildes* (Brill: 1967). It is essential therefore to review the scholarship of the past 45 years with a view to understanding what we now know about the reception of Eckhart, his life and works, his sources, his main philosophical and theological positions, and his death, condemnation, and influence. As is acknowledged by all, Eckhart died a faithful Catholic Christian. The fate of his lifework and works, however, is another matter. The combined institutional power of the Avignon papacy and the Cologne episcopacy saw to it that his works would be kept away from "the simple faithful" and where possible would be destroyed. It is a testimony to the dedication of his Cologne and Erfurt Dominican confreres, as well as to the other orders of friars—notably the Franciscans and the Augustinians—that they did not succeed in destroying Eckhart's works. But the sad truth is that they almost succeeded, and it has taken the massive work of 19th- and 20th-century scholars to recover Eckhart's oeuvre. The words "simple faithful" is in part a misnomer, however. Eckhart was a popular preacher with a distinct mission. In a time when only the elite received an education in human and divine matters, Eckhart, as a mendicant friar, believed that it was his duty to educate all Christians, taking into account the "mode of reception" of his respective audiences. They ranged from the truly simple faithful to a Christian audience that was progressively being educated by the friars, to his Erfurt audience of skilled philosophers and theologians. Paris had come to Erfurt. Eckhart, Dietrich of Freiberg, Thomas of Erfurt, and many others put Erfurt on the intellectual map. In time, the great Amplonius Rating de Berka would found the University of Erfurt. The role of learning was guaranteed by the presence of teachers (lector) in all the houses under Eckhart's care.

The reception of Meister Eckhart's works from 27 March 1329 to the present time has been negatively affected by the papal bull *In agro dominico* promulgated by Pope John XXII. The very fact that the Dominican order attempted two decades ago to seek papal reinstatement of Eckhart proves the point. You institutionally brand a teacher, remove his works

from circulation, and the difficult matter of a brave, caring but questioning theologian has been solved. We have much experience of this procedure in our own times. Hitherto, it has been the scholarly understanding that the immediate effect of the bull was to prevent the spread of Eckhart's writings in the province of Cologne. We now know, thanks to the very recent research of Professor Robert E. Lerner (Northwestern University), that the bull was enforced elsewhere in Germany and in the Low Countries, and perhaps further afield. For too long we have had but a very limited understanding of the response of German theologians and preachers to the demand of the bull that Eckhart's reputation be treated negatively as one who sowed bad seed in the field of the Lord and as one who was not to be respected as an official teacher of Catholic doctrine. His teachings were to be treated as sounding heretical or as leading to heresy. In other words, he was to be treated as an outcast so as not to give scandal to the "simple faithful."

Thanks, however, to the research of Nadia Bray (Lecce) in her chapter "The Reception of Meister Eckhart in 14th-Century Germany," we now have for the first time a comprehensive review of how the condemnation of Eckhart's teachings was received among some Franciscan, Dominican and Augustinian theologians. The important commentators are Marquard Von Lindau, OFM, William Jordan OP, John of Dambach OP, Jordan of Quedlinburg, OESA, and John Hiltalingen of Basel, OESA.

The most obvious element of reception here is the willingness, despite the condemnation, of these theologians to continue to use Eckhart's works in their preaching. However, great care is given to avoid those sentences explicitly condemned as heretical by the papal bull. The latter document is often used to draw a marker in regard to the orthodoxy of Eckhart's works. Unfortunately, it also serves as a signal to avoid any deeper metaphysical reflection on the subject matter of Eckhart's preaching. Still, as is clear especially from John Hiltalingen of Basel, an effort is sometimes made to make significant philosophical/theological distinctions so as to save Eckhart from what appears to be an unorthodox expression. This involves John Hiltalingen in some thoughtful deconstruction of both Eckhart and the condemned sentences from *In agro dominico*. In other words, a careful set of distinctions is given in order to save the meaning of Eckhart's expressed doctrine. Clearly, however, the influence of Eckhart in these thinkers is for the most part in the area of moral teaching and example. Yet, despite this avoidance of the more difficult philosophical issues, these educators are willing to draw teaching from Eckhart's important philosophical commentary, the *Commentary on St John*.

Dagmar Gottschall's comprehensive review, "Eckhart and the Vernacular Tradition: Pseudo-Eckhart and Eckhart Legends," offers a very judicious introduction to this difficult field of study. Unlike the Latin works, there is no definitive source for the transmission of the vernacular oeuvre. It is agreed that Eckhart did have a book of sermons, but it has not survived. Eckhart's vernacular sermons, which were very popular, were transmitted in various anthologies. As with such spiritual anthologies, one has 'mosaic' treatises and collections of *dicta* and *sententiae*. The vernacular works were first published in volume two of Franz Pfeiffer's *Deutsche Mystiker des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig: 1857; reprint Aalen: 1962). The first part of this chapter (section 1) discusses the most important collections of Eckhart sayings. It presents those sermons that have been included as authentic Eckhart works in the Stuttgart edition and it indicates those sermons and statements that remain to be studied. Twelve pieces come under the rubric of "Pseudo-Eckhart," and are taken from Jundt's collection. Other Eckhart-related materials are taken from Franz Jostes' collection of the 14th-century Nuremburg collection of sermons from the Dominican convent of St Catherine. Material is also taken from the 20 sermons published by Eduard Sievers and attributed to Meister Eckhart. Also included is the collection published by Philip Strauch in 1925 from a Berlin manuscript. The common feature of these anonymous texts is their "instability." They are in need of much critical study. Other treatises from Pfeiffer and Strauch are discussed. The review concludes with a critical discussion of the fourth part of Pfeiffer's edition, the *Liber positionum*.

The second part of this chapter (section 2) examines texts that contain various legends about Meister Eckhart. These legends testify to the popularity of Eckhart as a preacher. The texts include: *Meister Eckhart and the Poor Man, I and II*, *Meister Eckhart's Daughter*, and *Meister Eckhart's Symposium*. These are indications of the great interest shown in Eckhart's life and work by pious groups of laypersons. They demand serious study and comparison with the authentic works of Eckhart. Since there is no comprehensive study of all of these texts, the Gottschall's chapter serves as a most important general introduction to topic. It is also an indication of the amount of critical work that needs to be done.

Elizabeth Brient, the North American expert on Nicholas of Cusa, sees the Cardinal from Cues as a pivotal figure in the transition from medieval times to modernity. Her chapter "Meister Eckhart's Influence on Nicholas of Cusa: A Survey of the Literature" makes available for English-language readers the very complex research that has been done during the past 45 years on the manner in which Eckhart's works were received by the

learned philosopher, lawyer, bibliophile, and theologian, Nicholas of Cusa (1401–61). She demonstrates the great extent to which Nicholas of Cusa had the skills that enabled him to appropriate much of Eckhart's philosophical and theological project. Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa was not unaware of some difficulties in Eckhart's thought, but he had the necessary philosophical acumen to be able to raise the discussion to a much higher philosophical level. From his *De docta ignorantia* to his later sermons, Nicholas of Cusa worked out of his major collection of Eckhart's Latin works and some of the German works. In writing against Johannes Wenck, Cusa was careful to hide from public view the fact and the extent of his Eckhart collection. In other words, he assembled a very good archive of Eckhart materials. He also had a better philosophical comprehension of Eckhart's philosophical language than some of the early readers of Eckhart in the 14th century. He clearly saw the connection between Eckhart and the classics of Greek Christianity.

Fiorella Retucci, in her chapter "On a Dangerous Trail: Henry Suso and the Condemnation of Meister Eckhart," takes up some difficult topics of interpretation concerning Meister Eckhart as a consequence of the papal bull *In agro dominico*. Henry Suso OP was Eckhart's disciple in Cologne. Retucci demonstrates how Suso presents the difficulties posed by the condemned sentences in the papal bull. Nevertheless, in the end, Suso places Thomas Aquinas in a secondary position when compared with the great interpretative ability of Meister Eckhart. For Suso, Eckhart is represented by the golden apples, as distinct from the silver apples of Aquinas. This chapter deals with the age-old attempt to domesticate Eckhart by reducing his teaching to a simple copy of the "more orthodox" expression of doctrine in Aquinas. This is a very judicious comparison of Suso's *Little Book of Truth* and the condemned propositions from the papal bull, *In agro dominico*.

Andrew Weeks, the respected interpreter of mysticism in the Reformed traditions, in his chapter "Meister Eckhart and Valentin Weigel" presents a vivid account of how Eckhart's works in the post-Reformation times crossed the confessional divide. He tells the story of the important 16th- and 17th-century Lutheran Pastor, Valentin Weigel, a Christian leader whose primary aim was care for good preaching, which enabled him to be a Christian despite the murky waters of war and power politics on the part of the confessional bodies, both Protestant and Catholic. Weeks carefully examines and presents the way in which Valentin Weigel used the Adam Petri Basel edition of medieval German mystical writings to

bring these texts to life in the midst of the post-Reformation crises. Weigel shows that Eckhart's skillful Christian preaching could be appropriated by the Reformed traditions.

Cyril O'Regan's chapter "Eckhart's Reception in the 19th Century" presents the first comprehensive account in English of the manner in which Eckhart was rediscovered by the German romantics and idealists in the early 19th century. This rediscovery of Eckhart by Von Baader, Hegel, Fichte, and Schelling has major implications for contemporary understanding of the meaning of Eckhart for modernity. For too long, research on this important topic has been a closed book for those in the English-language world who do not read German. In particular, due to lack of translation, the great work of Professor Werner Beierwaltes has been lost to the average English-language student of German idealism and romanticism. O'Regan's account is fresh and balanced. Von Baader, Hegel, Schelling, and Fichte are presented in regard to the manner in which they appropriated Eckhart's teaching. This manner of reception is complicated not least due to the major shifts in perspective from the closed world of the medieval cosmos to the infinite universe of modern science. It will come as a surprise to many that the Eckhartian notion of beatitude finds a resonance in Fichte's account of the blessed life. O'Regan's account concludes with a rich interpretation of the Danish Lutheran bishop, Hans L. Martensen (1808–84). He is seen as the one who understood the limits of the retrieval of Eckhart by German idealism. He had a greater historical grasp of Eckhart's project than did the great philosophers. Yet, he also had a more profound understanding of the depth and the totality of Eckhart's philosophical and theological project than did the great philosophers.

Dermot Moran's chapter "Meister Eckhart in 20th-Century Philosophy" outlines the very unexpected but effective series of "revivals" of Eckhart from the period of World War I to the beginning of the 21st century. He deals mainly with Eckhart's place in philosophy, but he also includes judicious and significant comment on the place of Eckhart in late 20th-century modern and postmodern theology. As he demonstrates, World War I provides the context for a renewed interest in Eckhart. The availability of affordable texts, in particular those of the German sermons, proved to be a source of great consolation for a generation that found itself in deep spiritual crisis. Moran notes that 19th- and early 20th-century thinkers such as Arthur Schopenhauer in Europe and Josiah Royce in the United States are just the beginning of a list of philosophers who took a deep interest in Eckhart. He came to be seen as "a pre-Cartesian discoverer

of subjectivity and infinity.” These philosophers include “existentialists (Jaspers), phenomenologists (Martin Heidegger), Marxists (Ernst Bloch), and postmodern theologians (John D. Caputo and Michael Henry).” It also includes major thinkers on religion and human life such as Martin Buber, Rudolf Otto, and Erich Fromm. Moran provides a careful account of Martin Heidegger’s retrieval of the central Eckhartian concept of *Gelassenheit* (letting be, abandonment of self-willing). Heidegger’s discussion of this concept in the context of the human comportment towards modern technology is an index of some very deep reading of Eckhart.

The Epilogue by the late Karl Albert titled “Epilogue: Meister Eckhart—Between Mysticism and Philosophy” provides the English-language reader with an entry into a German discussion that has been a virtual closed book for English-language readers. In the post-World War II period, Karl Albert wrote some very significant works on philosophy and mysticism. Not least among these was his work on Eckhart’s theory of Being. The Epilogue is of course polemical, and it represents Karl Albert’s critical response to new interpretations of Eckhart as philosopher, theologian, and mystic. The advantage of the Epilogue is that it places Eckhart’s theology and mysticism in the context of the deep influence of Greek philosophical mysticism on Eckhart. This tradition was mediated through many sources. But it is to Eckhart’s great credit that he truly appreciated that it was not a tradition that was inimical to Christianity. Problems of course arise for this tradition in modernity, especially in the context of the 19th-century historical project of a rediscovery of the Middle Ages. The Epilogue serves its purpose by making available the inner-German debate on the nature of Eckhart’s mysticism. Some in the English-language scholarship, not without reason, will see it as a peculiarly German concern. The reduction of religion to morality in Kant is very much in the background of this debate. The 21st century is a time of the intermingling of world religions and this fact makes such a reduction of religion to morality very questionable. Hegel, Von Baader, Schelling, and Fichte understood this, but the willful ignorance of some modern philosophical traditions chooses to ignore it. Their understanding of the matter did not set Kant’s concern aside. No, rather, they took up his concerns and transformed them. In this, one might see an analogy with the manner in which Eckhart took up Thomas Aquinas and transformed him.

Appendix 1 “Dominican Education” by Walter Senner OP is an important element in the volume. It shows the reader that we must not think of Eckhart as some kind of “beamed-down” mystic, alone in a world of his own. No. Eckhart embodies the very thorough and careful curriculum of

Dominican education. He engaged in the training of thought so that as a preacher he would be well prepared to communicate the central understandings of good philosophy and well-understood theology. From this Appendix, the reader will get a sense of the strong professionalization of training among the Dominicans.

THE RECEPTION OF MEISTER ECKHART IN 14TH-CENTURY GERMANY

Nadia Bray

On 26 September 1326 in Cologne, Eckhart appeared before the Court of Inquisition. He had been summoned by a board of theologians established by the archbishop of Cologne, Henry II of Virneburg. The learned Dominican, wounded by the serious and slanderous accusation of heresy, put forward his self-defense in the form of a written text known to historians as the *Responsio* of Cologne.¹ On 24 January 1327 Eckhart appealed to the Holy See.² On 13 February he made a declaration of orthodoxy in the Dominican church of Cologne,³ and on 22 February the commissioners of the Inquisition rebutted his appeal.⁴ In the spring and summer of 1327 the trial moved to the Papal See at Avignon. In the beginning the Dominican prosecutor's office declared itself to be in favor of Eckhart,⁵ but later a board appointed by the papacy judged as wrong or heretical a certain number of sentences from his works in Latin and in German.⁶ In 1328, probably on 28 January, Eckhart died.⁷ On 27 March 1329 Pope John XXII concluded the proceedings by issuing the papal bull, *In agro dominico*, that is, the judgement of 28 articles containing Eckhart's doctrines.⁸

¹ See "Mag. Echardi Responsio ad articulos sibi impositos de scriptis et dictis suis," *Acta Echardiana*, n. 48, LW V, 275–354.

² See *Acta Echardiana*, n. 53, LW V, 544–47.

³ See *Acta Echardiana*, n. 54, LW V, 547–49.

⁴ See *Acta Echardiana*, n. 55, LW V, 550–51.

⁵ See *Acta Echardiana*, n. 56, LW V, 552–56.

⁶ See *Acta Echardiana*, n. 57, LW V, 557–60.

⁷ See *Acta Echardiana*, n. 61, LW V, 592–93.

⁸ See *Acta Echardiana*, n. 65, LW V, 596–600; for studies concerning the documentation of the trial, see G. Théry, "Édition critique des pièces relatives au procès d'Eckhart contenues dans le ms. 33 b de la Bibliothèque de Soest," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* (1926/27), 129–268; Théry, *Contribution à l'histoire du procès d'Eckhart. Première phase 1325–1326*, (Extrait de La Vie Spirituelle) (Ligué: 1926); M.-H. Laurent, "Autour du procès de Maître Eckhart. Les documents des Archives Vaticanes," *Divus Thomas* 39 (1936), 341–44; J. Koch, "Kritische Studien zum Leben Meister Eckharts," *Kleine Schriften*, 1 (Edizioni di storia e letteratura) 127 (Rome: 1973), 257–347; Beckmann, *Daten und Anmerkungen zur Biographie Meister Eckharts und zum Verlauf des*

The papal censorship effectively achieved the desired results: Eckhart's name disappeared from the official list of authors from the Dominican order and the spread of his writings and of his doctrines was very quickly restricted. This chapter will present a reconstruction of the reception of Meister Eckhart in Germany. This is a problem of particular interest to Eckhart experts. Joseph Koch began the search methodically. In his magisterial article of 1963, "Meister Eckharts Weiterwirken im Deutsch-Niederländischen Raum im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert,"⁹ the Cologne scholar offered an overall account of the issues for the first time. He recognized two forms of reception: on the one hand, there is that testified by the handwritten tradition of Eckhart's works, and, on the other, there is the form of reception restored through the quotations that other authors had made from his writings or from his doctrines. Scholars added a third reception to these two forms in which works are included that, even though they did not contain literal quotations, were dedicated to subjects typical of Eckhart, and were of course composed at the time Eckhart was writing.

1. THE HANDWRITTEN TRADITION OF ECKHART'S WORKS

First Form of Reception

In regard to the handwritten tradition of Eckhart's works, Koch counted only the five main manuscripts of the Latin works which were known

gegen ihn angestengten Inquisitionsprozesses (Frankfurt am Main: 1978); W. Trusen, *Der Prozeß gegen Meister Eckharts. Vorgeschichte, Verlauf und Folgen*, (Rechts- und Statswissenschaftlichen der Görres-Gesellschaft) NS 54 (Paderborn: 1988), Chapter 1; Trusen, "Zum Prozeß gegen Meister Eckhart. Nachweise und Berichte zum Prozeß gegen Meister Eckhart," in *Eckhardus Theutonicus homo doctus et sanctus*, ed. H. Stirnimann and R. Imbach, Dokimion 11 (Fribourg: 1992), 7–30; Trusen, "Meister Eckhart vor seinem Richtern und Zensoren," in *Meister Eckhart. Lebenstationen-Redesituationen*, ed. Klaus Jacobi (Berlin: 1997), 335–75; L. Sturlese, "Eckhart, l'inquisizione di Colonia e la memoria difensiva conservata nel codice di Soest 33," *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*, 80 (82), f. I (2001), 62–89.

⁹ See Joseph Koch, Meister Eckharts Weiterwirken im deutsch-niederländischen Raum im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert, *La Mystique Rhénane*. (Colloque de Strasbourg 16–19 mai 1961), (Paris, 1963), 133–56; repr. in *Kleine Schriften* 1 (Rome: 1973), 429–55, see 429–32.

at that time¹⁰ and two translations in the vernacular of the same.¹¹ The spread of the handwritten works in Latin compared with the works in German (302 manuscripts according to the census made by Joseph Quint)¹² seemed minimal to Koch and out of proportion. Koch held that the reason for the differing levels of success of Eckhart's works was a direct consequence of the papal bull, *In agro dominico*. He pointed out that the document explicitly condemned the doctrines preached by Eckhart to the *simplices*,¹³ but it was actually Eckhart's writings in Latin which attracted a greater number of charges: this contributed to the censorship of the Latin works and severely restricted their dissemination.

More than half a century later, Loris Sturlese developed an interpretation significantly different from that of Koch. First, he put right and supplemented the data supplied by the Cologne scholar: the number of witnesses of Eckhart's works in Latin increased to 14. To the five manuscripts

¹⁰ The five manuscripts quoted by Koch are the following: Erfurt, Cod. Amplon. F 181 (the first half of the 14th century with abbreviation E in the official edition), which contains the prologues to the *Opus tripartitum*, the first commentary on Genesis (original editing) and the commentaries on Exodus, Ecclesiasticus 24, and Wisdom; Trier, Cod. 72/1056 (end of the 14th century, abbreviation T in the official edition), with the prologues to the *Opus tripartitum*, the first commentary on Genesis, the second commentary on Genesis and on Exodus; Berlin, Cod. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preuß Kulturbesitz, Lat. Qu. 724 (15th century, abbreviation B) with the commentary on John; Kues, Cod. 21 (written in the year 1444, abbreviation C), which is the collection with the prologues, the first and the second commentary on Genesis, the commentaries on Exodus, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus 24 and John, the Lord's Prayer and Sermones, of ownership of the Cardinal Nicholas Cusano of Cusa; Basel, Cod. B VI 16 (half of 14th century, abbreviation K), which handed on a sequence of passages from the Latin work of Eckhart, made in Cologne towards the middle of the 14th century. For a short description of manuscripts and relative literature, see LW III, IXff.

¹¹ Berlin, Cod. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preuß. Kulturbesitz, Ms.germ. 2° 986 that handed on passages in German language of the *Commentary on Ecclesiasticus*, n. 51 (197 vb, see LW II, 280 note 4), the *Commentary on Wisdom*, nn. 4, 6, 8 (200ra–200va, see LW II, 330 note 2), and nn. 23, 24, 26, 34, 28 (202ra–202va, see LW II, 362 note 1) as well as a fragment of Sermon 109 (209vb); Pfeiffer uses a codex now lost that contains German translations of parts of the *Commentary on Wisdom* by Eckhart.

¹² See Joseph Quint, "Vorläufiges Verzeichnis der benutzten Handschriften und ihrer Siglen," in DW I, 607–12; DW II, 941–49.

¹³ See Bulla "In agro dominico" (*Acta Ecardiana*, n. 65), LW V, 601–05, see 597, 7–17: "Sane dolenter referimus, quod quidam hiis temporibus de partibus Theutonie, Ekardus nomine... dogmatizavit multa fidem veram in cordibus multorum obnubilantia, que docuit quammaxime coram vulgo simplici in suis predicationibus, que etiam redegit in scriptis."

indicated by Koch were added both the Oxford codex,¹⁴ discovered by Sturlese in 1985,¹⁵ and seven miscellaneous manuscripts containing single parts of Eckhart's works.¹⁶

Sturlese, writing about the success of Eckhart's works in German, based his studies on the description of the handwritten tradition by Wolfgang Klimaneck.¹⁷ Klimaneck's list, in spite of not being complete, since it is restricted to only 126 manuscripts, allows for certain results: (1) most of the examples came from Carthusian libraries; (2) a third of the handwritten tradition (42 examples) is traceable to female convents, a third (40 examples) to male friaries, and concerning another third (44 examples), it is not possible to locate the source; and (3) most of the examples contain only fragments or very few lines of Eckhart's texts.¹⁸

According to Sturlese, Klimaneck's information proves that Eckhart's writings in German were not as successful as those in Latin.¹⁹ In this, he disagreed with Joseph Koch. Therefore, papal censorship achieved the desired effect: it succeeded in preventing the dissemination of Eckhart's doctrines among the lay faithful.

¹⁴ Oxford, Cod. Bodl. Laud. Misc. 222 (1st half of 14th century: L), with the second commentary on Genesis, prologues, and the first commentary on Genesis.

¹⁵ See Loris Sturlese, "A new manuscript of Latin Eckhart's works and his meaning for the recreation of the text and of the history of *Opus tripartitum*," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 32 (1985), 145–54.

¹⁶ The seven miscellaneous Mss that Koch already knows but that he does not quote are: Avignon, Bibliothèque Communale, Cod. 1071 (156ff. 14th century, Abbreviation: A), which contains Eckhart's *Quest. Utrum in deo sit idem esse et intelligere* (113ra–vb), *Utrum intelligere angeli, ut dicit actionem, sit suum esse* (116v–117ra); Cues, Bibliothek des Hospitals, Cod. 125 (284ff., 15th century, Abbreviation: D), which contains the *Tractatus super orationem dominicam* (284v–284r); Erfurt, Stadtbücherei, Cod. Amplon. Fol. 321 (108ff. 14th century, Abbreviation F), which contains the *Collatio in Libros Sententiarum* (93ra–va); the Vatican City, Vat. Lat. 1086 (327ff., after 1323, Abbreviation: V1), which contains the *Articuli contra fratrem Aychardum Alamannum* (124r–130r); Soest, Stadtbibliothek, Cod. 33 b (14ff., 14th century, Abbreviation S), which contains the *Responsio* of Cologne (11ra–14ra).

¹⁷ See W. Klimaneck, *Verzeichnis de in DWIV benutzten Textzeugen Textzeuge und ihrer Sigeln* (2005).

¹⁸ See L. Sturlese, "Meister Eckhart and the 'cura monialium.' Critical observations on a historiographical myth," in *Ad Ingenii Acuitionem: Studies in Honor of Alfonso Maeriu*, 463–81, see 481, note 38.

¹⁹ Sturlese pointed out that, although not large, the handwritten tradition of the works in Latin was certainly comparable with that of the *De visione Beatifica* of Dietrich of Freiberg (three compilations), of the commentary of Bertold of Moosburg to the *Elementatio theologica* of Proclus (two manuscripts), or the *Summae theologiae* of Nicholas of Strasbourg (just one manuscript), that is, writings that were not condemned by any censor.

2. QUOTATIONS OF MEISTER ECKHART'S TEXTS IN DIFFERENT WRITERS

Second Form of Reception

As noted above, the study of the quotations from Eckhart in later writers belongs to the history of the reception of Eckhart's works. These quotations enable us to see the uses made by later scholars of Eckhart's texts and doctrines. As regards this second form of reception, Koch demonstrated that, in the 14th century, Eckhart's works continued to spread within three different orders of friars, namely, among the Dominicans (John of Dambach, Wilhelmus Iordanis [William Jordan], Henry Suso), the Franciscans (Marquard of Lindau), and the Augustinians (Jordan of Quedlinburg and John Hiltalingen of Basel). According to Koch, for the most part we meet with writers who, in spite of the bull of condemnation, quoted the suggestive expressions typical of Eckhart to adorn their treatises and their sermons.²⁰ These writers are not the *simplices* that the pope wanted to protect, but skilled people capable of reading Eckhart's texts critically.

The main addition to the body of studies, over 30 years since Koch's article, is the new research by Sturlese. This new addition made a fundamental distinction between the writers that Koch identified: first, there is the reception of the so-called "Eckhart's followers from Cologne;" second, there is the reception by those we should call "Eckhart's prudent followers." Among the writers that Koch identified, Henry Suso should be placed in the first intellectual group. These are all Dominicans and all are somehow connected with Cologne *studium generale*: they shared the same fundamental attachment to and defense of Eckhart's doctrines.²¹ Another group consists of those from both the Dominican and other orders who interpreted Eckhart, such as John of Dambach, William Jordan, Jordan of Quedlinburg, John Hiltalingen from Basel, and Marquard of Lindau—in other words, those I have defined as "Eckhart's prudent followers." Their reception of Eckhart's works looks ambiguous: even though Eckhart's name does not appear in these writers' texts, the references to his doctrines are anything but occasional or random. It is common knowledge in fact that they both openly criticize Eckhart's more controversial doctrines and that

²⁰ See Koch, "Meister Eckharts Weiterwirken," 452.

²¹ See Loris Sturlese, "Die Kölner Eckhartisten. Das Studium generale der deutschen Dominikaner und die Verurteilung der Thesen Meister Eckharts," in *Homo Dininus. Philosophische Projekte in Deutschland zwischen Meister Eckhart und Heinrich Seuse* (Stuttgart: 2007), 119–35.

they use expressions or textual passages based on Eckhart's works, while presenting them absolutely as their own. The criterion that guides their choice of Eckhartian texts and doctrines is not at all clear.

Modern scholars, before proposing a general interpretation, need to work on many documents of primary importance that are still unpublished and not much studied. Critical editions and accurate analysis of the texts are therefore the most important and awaited contributions. A particularly important contribution in this direction is the recent study that Freimut Löser²² carried out on the works of Marquard of Lindau. Löser in fact is not satisfied with Marquard's general interest in typical Eckhartian doctrines. Rather, he tries to understand the kind of use Marquard made of Eckhart's texts through an accurate analysis of single quotations related according to different parameters: selection and arrangements of passages; length of quotations; simplification of syntax; spread of doctrines; and the interpretation of condemned doctrines.

As we shall see, first with regard to Marquard of Lindau, and then with regard to the authors I examine below, the model of analysis that Löser constructed is a limited but secure contribution to the widening of this research.

2.1 *The Reception of Eckhart Among Franciscans: Marquard of Lindau*

At the end of the 14th century, the Franciscan Marquard of Lindau was a major representative of his order. He reached the height of his career in 1389 when he was made provincial of the huge Oberdeutsch province. He retained this office until his death in Constance in 1392, and was regarded as the most prolific German author of his order. In fact, he wrote many works in Latin and in German, of which at least 450 manuscripts²³ are still extant.

Scholars who have interpreted the relationship of Marquard's textual dependence on Eckhart express opposing judgements: Hoffmann,²⁴

²² See Freimut Löser, "Rezeption als Revision. Marquard von Lindau und Meister Eckhart," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 119 (1997), 425–58.

²³ On Marquard's life see, above all, Nigel F. Palmer, "Marquard von Lindau OFM," in *Verfasserlexikon. Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters* 6 (Berlin: 1987), 81–126 and Ottokar Bonmann, "Marquard von Lindau und sein literarischer Nachlaß," *Franziskanische Studien* 21 (1934), 315–43.

²⁴ See A.J. Hoffmann, *Der Eucharistie-Traktat Marquards Von Lindau*, (Hermaea) NS 7 (Tübingen: 1960), 251.

Ampe,²⁵ and Van Maren²⁶ regarded Marquard as simply an editor; Steer²⁷ thought he could make out aspects of originality in his use of Eckhart; and Palmer²⁸ judged that, within his order, he was theoretically skilled.

In 1864,²⁹ Joseph Bach put Marquard's description of St John's Prologue into the history of the reception of Eckhart, showing within it the presence of citations from John with notes by Eckhart. Bach's suggestion was drawn on and studied in detail by Heinrich S. Denifle in 1885.³⁰ In his article, the German scholar suggested that the Franciscan had been interested in Eckhart's moral presentations of the Gospel rather than in the "schwierigen metaphysischen und theologischen Erörterungen der *naturales expositiones*." Still, in commenting on the Prologue to St John's Gospel, as Koch³¹ emphasized on many occasions, Marquard, in spite of papal censorship, made express mention of Eckhart's name. Nigel Palmer recently discovered that Marquard's text on which Bach, Denifle, and Koch worked was, unbeknownst to them, an abbreviated version translated into German from the original in Latin.³² In this latter work, as clearly emerged from the deployment of sources in the part published by Sturlese,³³ Marquard quotes some of Eckhart's condemned doctrines in an attempt to accentuate the errors of Eckhart.³⁴

²⁵ See A. Ampe, "Marquard van Lindau en de Nederlanden," *Ons Geestlijk Erf* 24 (1960), 374–402, see 389 and 383.

²⁶ See J.W. Maren, "Zitate deutscher Mystiker bei Marquard von Lindau," *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur Alteren Germanistik* 20 (1983), 74–85, see 82.

²⁷ See G. Steer, "Geistliche Prosa," in *Die deutsche Literatur im späten Mittelalter* (1250–1370), ed. I. Glier, Geschichte des deutschen Literatur von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart 3/2 (Munich: 1987), 306–307, see 338f; G. Steer, "Der Armutsgedanke des deutschen Mystiker bei Marquard von Lindau," *Franziskanische Studien* 60 (1978), 298–300.

²⁸ Palmer, "Marquard von Lindau OFM," 81–126.

²⁹ Joseph Bach, *Meister Eckhart: Der Vater der deutschen Speculation* (Vienna: 1864), 205ff.

³⁰ See Heinrich S. Denifle, "Meister Eckeharts lateinische Schriften und die Grundanschauung seiner Lehre," *Archiv für Literatur und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters* 2 (1886), 417–615.

³¹ See Joseph Koch, "Einleitung" to LW III, S. XXIII; Koch, "Meister Eckharts Weiterwirken im deutschniederländischen Raum im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert," *Kleine Schriften*, (Edizioni di storia e letteratura) 127 (Rome: 1973), 429–55, see 442ff.

³² See Palmer, "Marquard von Lindau OFM," 117–19, with exact directions about all handwritten tradition.

³³ See Loris Sturlese, "Über Marquard von Lindau und Meister Eckhart," in *Glauben, Wissen, Handeln: Beiträge aus Theologie, Philosophie und Naturwissenschaft zu Grundfragen Christlicher Existenz Festschrift für Philipp Kaiser* (Würzburg: 1994), 277–89.

³⁴ The passages from John with notes by Eckhart quoted in the commentary on St John's Prologue have been identified precisely only with regard to the part edited by Kurt Ruh, *Franziskanisches Schrifttum im Deutschen Mittelalter* 2 (Munich: 1985), 199–210 (German version) and L. Sturlese, "Über Marquard von Lindau und Meister Eckhart" and

As shown by Rudiger Blümrich,³⁵ there are also quotations from John with notes by Eckhart in a pair of Marquard's vernacular sermons, namely, numbers 23 and 32.³⁶ On the other hand, the *Commentary on John* is not the only work of Eckhart's that Marquard knows: the main sources of the *De reparatione hominis* are in fact the first³⁷ and the second *Commentary on Genesis* by Eckhart.³⁸ Moreover, textual passages from Eckhart's German sermons are quoted in Marquard's works in the vernacular such as the *Dekalogserklärung*,³⁹ the *Eukaristientraktat*,⁴⁰ and in particular the sermons,⁴¹

are as follows: In Ioh. n. 214, LW III, 179, 15–180, 9; n. 215, LW III, 180, 10. 181, 5–11, 15–182, 5; n. 217, LW III, 182, 7–183, 6; n. 219, LW III, 184, 8–17; n. 220, LW III, 184, 18–185, 8; n. 221, LW III, 185, 10–17.

³⁵ See Rudiger Blümrich, *Marquard von Lindau. Deutsche Predigten. Untersuchungen und Edition*, Diss. Eichstätt 1989, (Texte und Textgeschichte) 34 (Tübingen: 1994).

³⁶ Blümrich, Marquard von Lindau, *Deutsche Predigten*, Pr. 23, 151–58; Pr. 32, 221–30.

³⁷ See Hermann-Josef May, Marquard von Lindau OFM. *De reparatione hominis*. Einführung und Textedition (Regensburger Studien zur Theologie) 5 (Frankfurt am Main/Berne: 1977), 11, 29–31 (= In Gen. I n. 185, LW I/1, 328, 7–9); 33, 24–28 (= In Gen. I n. 190, LW I/1, 333, 7–334, 3); 34, 8–18 (= In Gen. I n. 126, LW I/1, 281, 11–282, 4); 38, 34–37 (= In Gen. I n. 205, LW I/1, 353, 1–3); 39, 23–25 (= In Gen. I n. 205, LW I/1, 353, 6–7); 42, 10–11 (= In Gen. I n. 210, LW I/1, 357, 8–358, 1); 43, 19–24 (= In Gen. I n. 214, LW I/1, 360, 6–11).

³⁸ See May, Marquard von Lindau OFM. *De reparatione hominis*, 32, 17–24 (= In Gen. II n. 94, LW I/1, 559, 11–560, 5); 32, 25–28 (= In Gen. II n. 95, LW I/1, 560, 8–561, 5); 32, 31–32 (= In Gen. II n. 98, LW I/1, 563, 8–9, 564, 1–2); 32, 35–33, 34 (= In Gen. II n. 99, LW I/1, 564, 3–565, 9); 33, 5 (= In Gen. II n. 106, LW I/1, 572, 7–9); 37, 4–9 (= In Gen. II n. 155, LW I/1, 626, 1–5); 37, 9–19 (= In Gen. II n. 156, LW I/1, 626, 12–627, 7); 37, 19–24 (= In Gen. II n. 157, LW I/1, 627, 8–12); 37, 25–29 (= In Gen. II n. 158, LW I/1, 628, 6–629, 2).

³⁹ See Jacobus Willen Van Maren, Marquard von Lindau: *Die zehne Gebot* (Straßbourg 1516 und 1520). Ein katechetischer Traktat. Textausgabe mit Einleitung und sprachlichen Beobachtungen, (Quellen und Forschungen zur Erbaungsliteratur der späten Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit) 14 (Amsterdam: 1980) 78, 49–53 (= Pr. 2, DW I, 27, 4–9); 57, 63–66 (= Pr. 22, DW I, 376, 3–5); 104, 22–26 (= Pr. 34, DW II, 165, 3–166, 1); 21, 47 (= Pr. 17, ed. Pfeiffer, 76, 24); 29, 13–16 (= Pr. 26, ed. Pfeiffer, 100, 18–24).

⁴⁰ See Annelies Julia Hofmann, *Der Eucharistietraktat Marquard von Lindau*, (Hermea) 7 (Tübingen: 1960), 260, 61ff. (= Pr. 20a, DW I, 328, 5ff.); 304, 20ff. (= Pr. 20a, DW I, 328, 6ff.); 297, 30–298, 12 (= Pr. 2, DW I, 27, 4–9).

⁴¹ See Blümrich, Marquard von Lindau, *Deutsche Predigten. Untersuchungen und Edition*, Pr. 1, 8, 160–62 (= Pr. 70, DW III, 189, 3 + Pr. 1, ed. Pfeiffer, 100, 18f.); Pr. 1, 8, 160–62 and Pr. 32, 229, 270–72 (= Pr. 26, ed. Pfeiffer, 100, 18f.); Pr. 8, 71, 122–27 (= Pr. 37, DW II, 213, 4–6); Pr. 16, 119, 26–28 (= Pr. 6, DW I, 113, 3–6); Pr. 20, 135, 89–91 (= Pr. 2, DW I, 24, 8–25); Pr. 24, 165, 206–09 (= Pr. 19, DW I, 319, 1–4); Pr. 24, 160, 51–54 and Pr. 27, 182, 26–29 (= Spruch 41, ed. Pfeiffer, 610, 34–36); Pr. 26, 180, 151–53 (= Pr. 3, ed. Pfeiffer, 21, 33–40); Pr. 30, 206, 122–24 (= Pr. 2, ed. Pfeiffer, 14, 34–39); Pr. 31, 218, 203–06 (= Pr. 19, DW I, 318, 11–319, 4); Pr. 31, 217, 179–86 (= Pr. 20a, DW I, 332, 3–334, 4); Pr. 37, 265, 79–80 (= Pr. 52, DW V, 491, 8f.); Pr. 40, 304, 128–305, 134 (= Pr. 1, DW I, 15, 5–9).

as well as in his works in Latin, that is, in the *De reparatione hominis*,⁴² in the *De paupertate*,⁴³ and in the *De nobilitate creaturarum*.⁴⁴

In 1997, Freimut Löser, in "Rezeption als Revision. Marquard von Lindau und Meister Eckhart," analyzed one by one all of Eckhart's quotations that criticism had until then uncovered, and in some cases he supplemented them. Löser's study provides at least three results. Firstly, he singled out a series of subjects that Marquard had received from Eckhart's works: some subjects are more traditional, like the discourse on virtue or on sin, while others are typical of Eckhart's style, like that on synderesis,⁴⁵ on the divine generation of the Word,⁴⁶ on negative theology,⁴⁷ on God as *luter wesen*,⁴⁸ and on the surrendering of idols by the man who wants to receive God.⁴⁹

In only one case did Marquard explicitly take sides against Eckhart's censured doctrines, and that was in his commentary on the Prologue to St John's Gospel.⁵⁰ In the commentary on verse 1:10: "In mundo erat, et mundus . . . eum non cognovit," having made wide use of passages derived from Eckhart's *Commentary on St John* in an implicit and literal way, the author interrupts the composition of his pastiche to criticize one of the condemned doctrines in the papal bull *In agro dominico*, namely, the eternity of the world and of time.⁵¹

More frequent are the cases, however, where there is a severe shift and drift of meaning. In the new context, Eckhart's quotations, frequently simplified in the syntax, lose their original metaphysical meaning and take on

⁴² See May, Marquard von Lindau OFM. *De reparatione hominis*, 11, 32–41 (= Pr. 20a, DW I, 332f.).

⁴³ See Josef Hartinger, *Der Traktat "De paupertate" von Marquard von Lindau*, (Diss. Würzburg: 1965), 18–100, see 42, 6–15 (= Pr. 45, DW II, 362, 1–3).

⁴⁴ On the handwritten tradition see N. Palmer, Marquard von Lindau OFM, Sp. 111 (*De Nobilitate creaturarum*, Mskr. Masch. 16) (= Pr. 20a, DW I, 332, 2–334, 4).

⁴⁵ See May, Marquard von Lindau OFM. *De reparatione hominis*, 11, 32–41 (= Pr. 20a, DW I, 332ff.); *De nobilitate Creaturarum* (Mskr. Masch. 16) (= Pr. 20a, DW I, S. 332, 2–333, 4); Blümrich, *Marquard von Lindau. Deutsche Predigten*, Pr. 31, 217, 179–86 (= Pr. 20a, DW I, S. 332, 3–334, 4).

⁴⁶ See Blümrich, *ibid.*, Pr. 1, 8, 160–62 and Pr. 32, 229, 270–72 (= Pr. 26 Pfeiffer, 100, 18f.).

⁴⁷ See Blümrich, *ibid.*, Pr. 41, 312, 79–82 (= Pr. 71, DW III, 227, 6–228, 2); Pr. 26, 180, 151–53 (= Pr. 3, ed. Pfeiffer, S. 21, 33–40); Pr. 30, 206, 122–24 (= Pr. 2, ed. Pfeiffer, 14, 34–39).

⁴⁸ See Blümrich, Marquard von Lindau, *Deutsche Predigten*, Pr. 24, 160, 51–54 and Pr. 27, 182, 26–29 (= Spruch 41, ed. Pfeiffer, 610, 34–36).

⁴⁹ See Blümrich, *ibid.*, Pr. 40, 304, 128–305, 134 (= Pr. 1, DW I).

⁵⁰ See "Über Marquard von Lindau und Meister Eckhart" (note 33 above), 277–89, see 283.

⁵¹ See Bulla "In agro dominico" (*Acta Echardiana*, n. 65), LW V, 597, 26.

one of a perceptive and spiritual type.⁵² Particularly interesting are the cases where the drift of meaning takes place, through different omissions and agreements, to avoid the most dangerous of Eckhart's doctrines.⁵³ In sermon number 32 of Blümrich's edition,⁵⁴ for example, Marquard expounded the pericope *Lux venit in mundum* and quoted a long passage from Eckhart's Sermon 20, but he avoided associating himself with one of the most daring of Eckhart's positions. In fact, he controverts Eckhart's position on *synderesis* by invoking those *experts* (Alexander of Hales, Bonaventura, Albertus Magnus, and Thomas Aquinas) who defined the *synderesis* as a faculty of the soul.

The third and more frequent type of use that Marquard made of Eckhart's texts concerned some extra-thematic methods that Löser's analysis clearly highlighted. The author selected passages that sometimes contained an inlay of biblical⁵⁵ and patristic⁵⁶ quotations; others included intermediate philosophical and theological sources both implicitly⁵⁷ and explicitly;⁵⁸ natural metaphors were sometimes included,⁵⁹ or suggestive

⁵² This is particularly obvious in the following cases: May, Marquard von Lindau OFM. *De reparatione hominis*, 11, 29–31 (= In Gen. I n. 185, LW I/1, 328, 7–9); 32, 31–32 (= In Gen. II n. 98, LW I/1, 563, 8–9, 564, 1–2); 33, 24–28 (= In Gen. I n. 190, LW I/1, 333, 7–334, 3); 38, 34–37 (= In Gen. I n. 205, LW I/1, 353, 1–3); 43, 19–24 (= In Gen. I n. 214, LW I/1, 360, 6–11); Josef Hartinger, *Der Traktat "De Paupertate"* (note 43 above), 42, 6–15 (= Pr. 45, DW II, S. 362, 1–4); see Hofmann, *Der "Eucharistietraktat,"* 260, 61ff. (= Pr. 20a, DW I, 328, 5ff.); 304, 20ff. (= Pr. 20a, DW I, 328, 6ff.); Blümrich, *Marquard von Lindau* (note 35 above), Pr. 20, 135, 89–91 (= Pr. 2, DW I, 24, 8–25); Pr. 24, 165, 206–09 (= Pr. 19, DW I, 319, 1–4); Pr. 31, 218, 203–06 (= Pr. 19, DW I, 318, 11–319, 4); Pr. 37, 265, 79–80 (= Pr. 52, DW V, 491, 8f.).

⁵³ *De nobilitate creaturarum* (= Pr. 20°, DW I, 332, 2–333); see Hofmann, *Der "Eucharistietraktat,"* 260, 61ff. (= Pr. 20a, DW I, 328, 5ff.).

⁵⁴ See Marquard von Lindau, *Pr. 32*, ed. R. Blümrich, 217, 180–86 (= Eckhart, Pr. 20a, DW I, 332, 2–334, 4).

⁵⁵ See May, Marquard von Lindau OFM. *De reparatione hominis*, 42, 10–11 (= In Gen. I n. 210, LW I/1, 357, 8–358, 1).

⁵⁶ See May, Marquard von Lindau OFM. *De reparatione hominis*, 32, 35–33, 34 (= In Gen. II n. 99, LW I/1, 564, 3–565, 9); 34, 8–18 (= In Gen. I n. 126, LW I, 1, 281, 11–282, 4); Blümrich, *Marquard von Lindau, Deutsche Predigten*, Pr. 8, 71, 122–27 (= Pr. 37, DW II, 213, 4–6); Pr. 41, 312, 78–79 (= Pr. 70, DW III, 189, 3f.).

⁵⁷ See May, Marquard von Lindau OFM. *De reparatione hominis*, 37, 4–9 (= In Gen. II n. 155, LW I/1, 626, 1–5); *Commentary on St John, Prologue*, ed. L. Sturlese (= In Ioh. n. 221, LW III, 185, 10–17).

⁵⁸ See May, Marquard von Lindau OFM. *De reparatione hominis*, 37, 9–19 (= In Gen. II n. 156, LW I/1, 626, 12–627, 7); *St John Prologue*, ed. L. Sturlese (= In Ioh. n. 216, LW III, 181, 15–182, 5; n. 217, LW III, 182, 9–183, 6).

⁵⁹ See May, *ibid.*, 37, 19–24 (= In Gen. II n. 157, LW I/1, 627, 8–12); 37, 25–29 (In Gen. II n. 158, LW I/1, 628, 6–629, 2).

examples; and at other times unusual solutions with regard to some theological matters were also included.⁶⁰

In the *De reparatione hominis*, for example, taking the exegesis by Eckhart, Marquard expounded the prohibition imposed on the first man in regard to eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.⁶¹ In the *Expositio in Genesim II*, Eckhart comments on this in the light of the physical theorem according to which every reality degenerates because of contamination with an inferior reality. He adopted the Augustinian example of the metal that loses its color and resistance when it mingles with an inferior metal, and finally he declares that inferior reality is the good compared to the true. He thus puts forward his original explanation of the text of Genesis, which contained an implicit exhortation to the knowledge of truth rather than to the knowledge of good. Marquard preserves only the Augustinian quotation and omits the specification and the precise exegesis of Eckhart. Further, he abridged the quotation of the *Expositio in Genesim II* to contain only intermediate sources and he explained the divine admonishment, in a definitely traditional way, as a prohibition on daring to acquire the knowledge of good and evil.

The characterization of themes, figures of speech, sources, syntactical characteristics contained in the quoted passages, the definition of the probable drift of meaning, however slight, are the factors that contribute to a more precise description of the dependence of Marquard and of others on Eckhart's text. Löser's criteria applied to the works of other authors seem to me to be a useful means of studying in depth the nature of their reception of Eckhart.

2.2 *Eckhart's reception among the Dominicans: John of Dambach and William Jordan*

Among the Dominicans, John of Dambach (1288–1372)⁶² holds a position of the first rank in the reception of Eckhart. When he was 20 years old he entered a Dominican monastery at Strasbourg, where he completed his first theological studies. He then studied theology in Cologne and in Paris.

⁶⁰ See St John's Prologue, ed. L. Sturlese (= In Ioh. n. 219–20, LW III, 184, 8–185, 8).

⁶¹ Marquard von Lindau, *De reparatione hominis*, ed. May, 32, 17–28 (= Eckhart, Liber parabolarum Genesis, LW 1/1, nn. 94–95, 559, 11–561, 5).

⁶² See Albert Auer, *Johannes von Dambach und die tröstbücher von n. bzum 16. Jh.*, (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters) 27/2 (Münster in Westfalen: 1928) 1–5; Franz Joseph Worstbrock, "Johannes von Dambach O.P.," *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon*, 2, 4 (Berlin: 1983), 571–77, see 575–76.

In 1347 he obtained the degree of *magister theologiae* in Montpellier. In the same year he was sent to teach as *professor primarius* at the newly created University of Prague. Around 1360 he presumably returned to Strasbourg, where he devoted himself to the compilation of his literary works. The most well known and, as it were, the better studied, is the *Consolatio theologiae*.⁶³ It was in this very *Consolatio theologiae*, as was pointed out by Auer, that the author quotes widely from Eckhart's *Buch der göttlichen Tröstung*.⁶⁴ This might seem strange, not only because it was from this work of Eckhart that the inquisitors of Cologne drew a lot of material to provide documentary evidence to support their suspicions of heresy, but also because, during that trial, John of Dambach was twice a witness against Eckhart, as is shown by documents from the legal proceedings of 14⁶⁵ and 24 January 1327.⁶⁶ Certainly, therefore, it is no accident that the *Consolatio theologiae* does not contain any passages that were contested by the inquisitors. Because it contained the Eckhartian metaphysic of unity, no quotation, therefore, is taken from the first and most important part of the *Buch der göttlichen Tröstung*. Only two passages were drawn from the third part of the book, which Eckhart dedicated to examples of actions done and to words pronounced by wise men in pain. John of Dambach drew instead just 21 quotations from the second part, and he took care to prudently omit all the passages suspected of heresy.

As in the case of the *De reparatione hominis lapsi* of Marquard Von Lindau, so also with the *Consolatio theologiae*: the choice of the quoted passages was made according to extra-thematic criteria. Most of the passages selected by John of Dambach contained: (1) natural metaphors (the bitterness tasted by the invalid's tongue compared to the sadness of the soul without God;⁶⁷ the sphere of fire that transforms every storm into fire; the glass which, emptied of air, might rise up to the sky); (2) moral examples (the loss of part of one's property;⁶⁸ the loss of one of two eyes;⁶⁹ the stones turned into gold;⁷⁰ the eye that, devoid of colors, can see everyone;⁷¹

⁶³ See Auer, *Johannes von Dambach und die trostbücher*, 5–18.

⁶⁴ See Auer, *ibid.*, 342–53; for a complete view of the quotations of Johannes von Dambach see also "Anmerkungen zu Daz buoch der göttlichen troestunge," in *Meister Eckhart, Traktate*, DW V, 62–105.

⁶⁵ See *Acta Echadiana*, n. 50, LW V, 537, 57–58.

⁶⁶ See *Acta Echadiana*, n. 53, LW V, 547, 82–83.

⁶⁷ See John of Dambach, *Consolatio theologiae*, G III 3 (= DW V, 52–53).

⁶⁸ See John of Dambach, *Consolatio theologiae*, G III 6 (= DW V, 16).

⁶⁹ See John of Dambach, *Consolatio theologiae*, B IX 1 (= DW V, 26).

⁷⁰ See John of Dambach, *Consolatio theologiae*, K V 7 (= DW V, 27, 12–28, 1).

⁷¹ See John of Dambach, *Consolatio theologiae*, G VII 5 (= DW V, 28, 12–29, 2).

Saint Anthony tried by God);⁷² (3) the sparkling paradoxes (mourning of lament;⁷³ the advantage of having travelled a dangerous route;⁷⁴ the gratitude for something that is taken from us;⁷⁵ the joy of being consoled by God;⁷⁶ the idea of asking the pope for a bean; to bear all for secular goals and nothing for God);⁷⁷ (4) an intense psychological analysis (the pain that comes from love)⁷⁸ typical of Eckhart's style and method.

John, however, omitted Eckhart's more directly philosophical arguments. In the *Consolatio theologiae* G III 3 (Auer 346), for example, he adopted Eckhart's words to indicate that the cause of pain was the love of temporalities. But he omitted a specification of Eckhart's, namely, that love, in its turn, came from likeness. Moreover, he did not mention among the reasons for consolation that of the divine sequence that Eckhart, however, understood as preamble and consequence of a philosophically well-grounded choice: the separation of the soul from its natural tension towards external appearance and the turning towards its own inner divine life. Finally, the reflection on the soul, as a place of divine generation of the Word, did not appear at all among those of Eckhart quoted by John.

In Eckhart's reception, the English Dominican Wilhelmus Iordani or Iordanis (William Jordan) also deserves a mention. Koch advanced the hypothesis that William, master of theology at Oxford in 1350, could have known and perhaps shared some of Eckhart's ideas.⁷⁹ He based this view on the evidence contained in the fourth *Responsio* of the German Augustinian hermit Johannes Hiltalingen of Basel. According to the latter, in fact, William Jordan developed the question on the eternity of creation according to Eckhart's interpretation.⁸⁰ As far as I have been able to establish, Koch's hypothesis has not yet been verified: of the works that in the old lists were attributed to William in fact only some sermons that

⁷² See John of Dambach, *Consolatio theologiae*, B IX 3 (= DW V, 37).

⁷³ See John of Dambach, *Consolatio theologiae*, G III 3 (= DW V, 19, 12–16).

⁷⁴ See John of Dambach, *Consolatio theologiae*, K V 8 (= DW V, 35, 14–21).

⁷⁵ See John of Dambach, *Consolatio theologiae*, B IX 3 (= DW V, 37, 13–15).

⁷⁶ See John of Dambach, *Consolatio theologiae*, B I 23 (= DW V, 50, 9–12).

⁷⁷ See John of Dambach, *Consolatio theologiae*, B VII 2 (= DW V, 59, 22–60, 4).

⁷⁸ See John of Dambach, *Consolatio theologiae*, G III 3 (= DW V, 17, 9–11).

⁷⁹ See Koch, "Meister Eckharts Weiterwirken," 441.

⁸⁰ Iohannes de Basilea, *Responsio* 4 (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 26 711, f. 244v; Fribourg, Couvent des PP. Cordeliers, Cod. 26, f. 54 va): "Ex his patet contra Wilhelmum Iordani in illa quaestione e articulo quo quaerit, utrum primum principium (principians Clm 26 711) producat aeternaliter res ad extra. Nam totus processus Benedicti XII contra primum et secundum articulum Eckardi est similiter contra istum, in quo processu Benedictus asserit conclusionem tam Eckardi quam Wilhelmi haeticam esse, quamvis de Wilhelmo non faciat mentionem."

Kaeppli published under the name *Un sermonnaire anglais contenu dans le ms. Toulouse 342*⁸¹ are known. It is impossible, therefore, to expand on a description of his reception of Eckhart in the present situation.

2.3 *The Reception of Eckhart among the Friar-Hermits of Saint Augustine*

It is in the Order of Friar-Hermits of Saint Augustine that can be found the greatest number of authors who, even though they did not share Eckhart's main doctrines, knew and made much use of his texts. As well as Prosper from Reggio Emilia, to whom we owe the collection of Eckhart *Quaestiones Parisienses* in Cod. Vat. Lat. 1086,⁸² his fellow brothers Henry of Frimaria the Elder, Jordan of Quedlinburg, and John Hiltalingen of Basel are also important for Eckhart's reception. These were three intellectuals who not only belonged to the same Order of Friar-Hermits but also knew each other personally. Jordan of Quedlinburg was disciple and collaborator of Henry of Frimaria at the *studium generale* of Erfurt and he dedicated to John Hiltalingen of Basel the *Liber vitasfratrum*, the work that made him famous among his brothers.

One notices some significant differences in the reception of Eckhart by these three writers. Above all, Henry differs from the others. In the works of Jordan of Quedlinburg and of John Hiltalingen of Basel, Eckhart's doctrines were quoted literally: their texts, in fact, as well as documents of Eckhart's reception, are important witnesses for the philological reconstruction of the said works of Eckhart. In the works of Henry of Friemar,

⁸¹ See Thomas Kaeppli, "Un sermonnaire anglais contenu dans le ms. Toulouse 342," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 29 (1959), 89–110.

⁸² See Magister Eckhardus, *Quaestiones Parisienses*, ed. B. Geyer, (Die lateinischen Werke 5) (Stuttgart: 1936), 33–34. For the chronology suggested by Glorieux see P. Glorieux, "A propos de Vat. lat. 1086. Le personnel enseignant de Paris vers 1311–1314," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 5 (1933), 23–39. The date suggested by Glorieux was debated by W.J. Courtenay, "Reflections on Vat. Lat. 1086 and Prosper of Reggio Emilia, O.E.S.A.," in *Theological Quodlibeta in the Middle Ages: The Fourteenth Century*, ed. C. Schabel (Leiden: 2007), 345–57, which underlined the elements that went on until the 1314 about the time post quem of editing of matters in the group A and it debated that the second was immediately subsequent to the first in chronological order, without suggesting a date yet. About Prosper of Reggio Emilia and the manuscript Vat. Lat. 1086, see A. Pelzer, "Prosper of Reggio Emilia, des Ermites de Saint-Augustin, et le manuscrit latin 1086 de la bibliothèque Vaticana," *Revue néo-scholastique de la philosophie* 30 (1928), 316–51; R. Friedman, "The Sentences Commentary, 1250–1320. General Trends, the Impact of the Religious Orders, and the Test Case of Predestination," in *Mediaeval Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, vol. 1, ed. G.R. Evans (Leiden: 2002), 81n (with relevant bibliography).

however, as suggested by other scholars,⁸³ the subjects and the language, although they sound typically Eckhartian, seem completely deprived of their original Eckhartian meaning and, so transformed, they are reintroduced into the accepted traditional orthodoxy.

In 1453 Nicholas of Cusa was the first to identify Jordan of Quedlinburg's works as documents for the reception of Meister Eckhart.⁸⁴ The German Augustinian, born in about 1300, completed his first theological studies in Bologna (1317–19) and in Paris (1319–22), before holding the post of vicar general of the order in Avignon (1344), and he was also provincial in Germany (1345–51). He taught in the *studia provincialia* of Magdeburg and of Erfurt and finally he cooperated with the Inquisition.⁸⁵ The writer of many works—homiletics, hagiographical, spiritual, and ascetical in nature⁸⁶—Jordan was well known above all because he wrote the first history of the Order of Friar-Hermits of Saint Augustine, the already quoted *Liber vitasfratrum*, and also for his *Meditationes de passione Christi*, but above all for his two sermon collections “de tempore,” the *Opus postillarum et*

⁸³ See A. Zumkeller, “Ein Zeitgenosse Eckharts zu Fehlentwicklungen in der damaligen mystischen Bewegung. Kritische Bemerkungen in neuentdeckten mystischen Traktaten Heinrichs von Friemar des Älteren O.S.A.,” in *Kirche und Theologie in Franken*, Würzburger Diözesangeschichtsblätter 37/38 (Würzburg: 1975), 229–38; Henry of Friemar, *Tractatus de adventu verbi in mentem*, ed. A. Zumkeller, *Tractatus Ascetico-Mystico*, Corpus Scriptorum Augustinianorum 3, 1 (Rome: 1975), xx–xxi; J. Hackett, “The Reception of Meister Eckhart: Mysticism, Philosophy and Theology in Henry of Friemar (the Elder) and Jordanus of Quedlinburg,” in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt*, ed. A. Speer and L. Wegener, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 32 (Berlin: 2005), 554–86, 555; J. Hackett, “Augustinian Mysticism in Fourteenth-Century Germany: Henry of Friemar and Jordanus of Quedlinburg,” in *Augustine: Mystic and Mystagogue*, ed. J. Schnaubelt and F. Van Fleteren, *Collectanea Augustiniana* 3 (New York: 1994), 439–56, see 7.

⁸⁴ “Vide Eckhardum quem sine nomine recitat Iordanus in sermone huius nativitatis”: see Nicolaus Cusanus, “Sermo in die s. Iohannis evangelistae,” *Opera omnia*. Sermones III (1452–55), ed. Rudolf Haubst and Henrich Pauli (Hamburg: 1995), 90–91. For the first time quoted by Joseph Koch, in Meister Eckhart, *Expositio sancti Evangelii secundum Iohannem*, LW III, 2, note 3.

⁸⁵ On the bibliography of Jordan, see Adolar Zumkeller, “Die Lehrer des geistlichen Lebens unter den deutschen Augustinern vom dreizehnten Jahrhundert bis zum Konzil von Trent,” *Sanctus Augustinus Vitae Spiritualis Magister*, II (Rome: 1959), 239–338, esp. 261–68; ed. “Jourdain de Saxe,” *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* (Paris: 1974), 1423–30; Zumkeller, “Jordanus von Quedlinburg,” *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon* 2, ed. Kurt Ruh, IV (Berlin: 1984), 855–61; E. Saak, *Highway to Heaven: The Augustinian Platform Between Reform and Reformation*, 1292–1524, (Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought) 89 (Leiden: 2002), 243–67 (with wide documentation).

⁸⁶ For the bibliography see Adolar Zumkeller, *Manuskripte von Werken der Autoren des Augustiner-Eremitordens in mitteleuropäischen Bibliotheken* (Würzburg: 1966), 285–319.

*Sermones de tempore*⁸⁷ and the *Opus Ior*, and for his sermon “de sanctis,” that is, the *Opus Dan*.⁸⁸

The first two collections, the *Opus postillarum* and the *Opus Ior*, testified, as scholars have demonstrated,⁸⁹ that Jordan of Quedlinburg was a good judge of Eckhart: the implicit quotations of the *Commentary on John* and of the *Commentary on Genesis* contained the Christmas cycle⁹⁰ and Sermon 406 of the same *Opus postillarum*⁹¹ testified that the writer, in spite of the papal censorship, did not hesitate to use the works of the Dominican; the three articles of the bull *In Agro Dominico* quoted in the

⁸⁷ The *Opus postillarum* was handed on in 300 manuscripts and was printed in Strasbourg in 1483. On the handwritten tradition of the work see Zumkeller (note 85 above), 302–10, and Johannes Baptist Schneyer, *Repertorium der lateinischen Sermones des Mittelalters für die Zeit von 1150–1350*, III, (BGTPM) 43, 3 (Münster: 1971), 802–25.

⁸⁸ See Nadia Bray, *Opus Ior. Registrum Sermonum, Tabula Contentorum Secundum Ordinem Alphabeti* (Pisa: 2004).

⁸⁹ See Joseph Koch, “Einleitung,” LW III, XXIII; Koch, “Meister Eckharts Weiterwirken,” 443–46; Jeremiah Hackett, “The use of a text quotation from Meister Eckhart by Jordan of Quedlinburg (Saxony), O. S. A.,” *Proceedings of the Patristic, Mediaeval and Renaissance Conference*, 2 (1977), 97–102; Hackett, “Verbum mentalis conceptio in Meister Eckhart and Jordanus of Quedlinburg. A Text Study,” in *Sprache und Erkenntnis im Mittelalter* (Akten des VI. Internationalen Kongresses für Mittelalterliche Philosophie, Bonn, 1977), (Miscellanea Mediaevalia) 13/2 (Berlin: 1981), 1003–11.

⁹⁰ See Jordan von Quedlinburg, *Opus postillarum et Sermonum de Evangelii domini calibus. De nativitate Domini-Opus Ior, Sermones delecti defiliatione divina*, ed. Nadia Bray (Hamburg: 2008), *Opus postillarum* n. 68 (= Eckhart, In Ioh. n. 8, LW III, 8, 13–9, 7; n. 33, LW III, 26, 12–14, 27, 1–6; n. 34, LW III, 28, 4–9; n. 40, LW III, 33, 10–18; n. 51, LW III, 41, 15–43, 3; n. 52, LW III, 43, 5–44, 8; n. 53, LW III, 44, 9–14; n. 56, LW III, 46, 13–47, 1); n. 69 (= In Ioh. 62, LW III, 51, 7–12; n. 65, LW III, 53, 13–54, 1; n. 66, LW III, 54, 6–55, 2; n. 68, LW III, 56, 7–57, 14; n. 69, LW III, 57, 15–58, 12; n. 70, LW III, 59, 4–10; n. 74, LW III, 62, 3–12; n. 76, LW III, 64, 1–65, 10; n. 77, LW III, 65, 11–66, 11; n. 78, LW III, 67, 1–68, 9; n. 80, LW III, 68, 10–69, 1.11); n. 71 (= In Ioh. 86, LW III, 74, 6–8; n. 87, LW III, 75, 3–76, 11; n. 89, LW III, 77, 1–8; n. 90, LW III, 77, 9–78, 7; n. 91, LW III, 78, 10–79, 1; n. 94, LW III, 81, 5–12; n. 95, LW III, 82, 5–7; n. 95, LW III, 82, 8–16); n. 72 (= In Ioh. n. 98, LW III, 84, 6–11; nn. 101–02, LW III, 87, 6–88, 11; n. 103, LW III, 88, 12–89, 11; n. 104, LW III, 89, 13–16; n. 105, LW III, 90, 1–4; n. 112, LW III, 97, 1–11; n. 113, LW III, 97, 14–98, 3; n. 115, LW III, 100, 9–15; n. 152, LW III, 126, 1–3.10–11); n. 73 (= In Ioh. 107, LW III, 91, 1–93, 11; n. 109, LW III, 94, 2–95, 2; n. 111, LW III, 95, 13–96, 17; n. 154, LW III, 127, 7–15); n. 74 (= In Ioh. n. 8, LW III, 7, 13–8, 1; n. 116, LW III, 101, 2–11); n. 75 (= In Ioh. n. 123, LW III, 107, 9–7); n. 76 (= In Ioh. n. 2, LW III, 4, 9–13; n. 3, LW III, 4, 14–17; n. 4, LW III, 5, 7–6, 11; n. 5, LW III, 7, 1–2, 4–9; n. 9, LW III, 10, 5–7; n. 10, LW III, 10, 8–14; n. 13, LW III, 12, 13–15, 17, 10–11; n. 20, LW III, 17, 11–18, 4, 6; n. 21, LW III, 18, 7–8; n. 36, LW III, 32, 4–5; n. 57, LW III, 48, 9–10; n. 135, LW III, 115, 13–16; n. 139, LW III, 117, 9–10.14–118, 1–4; n. 140, LW III, 118, 5–8; n. 141, LW III, 119, 1–5; n. 152, LW III, 126, 3–6; Tabula, LW III, 652, 5–9; n. 6, LW III, 8, 1–2; n. 7, LW III, 8, 6–8; proem., LW III, 3, 1–7); n. 78 (= In Gen. I 7, LW I/1, 190, 12–191, 5); n. 79 (= In Ioh. n. 8, LW III, 8, 13–9, 7).

⁹¹ Loris Sturlese, “The doctrine of divine perfections of Eckhart in the interpretation of Jordan of Quedlinburg” (forthcoming).

Christmas cycle of the *Opus postillarum*⁹² and the ideas of the so-called *Rechtfertigungsschrift* quoted in five sermons of the *Opus Ior*⁹³ demonstrated without doubt that Jordan had access to the documents of the trial against Eckhart.⁹⁴

The *Opus postillarum* and the *Opus Ior* are two collections of sermons about the evangelical pericopes of the liturgy *de tempore* and the *de sanctis*. For each feast the writer suggested a cycle of several sermons and sub-sermons where he tackled matters not only of a spiritual nature but also theological and philosophical issues. For example, Sermons nn. 68–79 of the *Opus postillarum* were a commentary to versicles 11–14 from St John's Gospel developed in relation to the subjects of the inter-Trinitarian relationship, about creation, about the figure of Saint John the Baptist, and about the reasons, means, and aim of the Incarnation. On each subject the writer studied in depth several matters of a theological and philosophical kind. He availed himself of the solutions of five great theologians: Albert of Padua, Henry of Ghent, Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, and Meister Eckhart. The names of these writers did not appear in Jordan's sermons, but their texts were perfectly recognizable because they were quoted literally. Besides, the sources that Jordan put together were not at all juxtaposed, but were used in accordance with precise criteria. In all the sermons of the Christmas cycle, in fact, he drew from Bonaventure the macrostructure of the sermon,⁹⁵ from Henry of Ghent the gnoseological

⁹² See Bulla "In agro dominico" (*Acta Ecardiana*, n. 65), art. XI, LW V, 598, 47–49; art. XII, LW V, 598, 50–51; art. XXI, LW V, 599, 70–71.

⁹³ See Jordan von Quedlinburg, *Opus postillarum* (note 90 above), *Opus Ior* n. 50 (= Proc. Col. I n. 19, LW V, 308, 8–13; n. 50, LW V, 314, 2–3, 9–10, 16–19; n. 59, LW V, 315, 4–5, 7–9; n. 62, LW V, 315, 24–25; n. 63, LW V, 315, 30–31, 6, 3; n. 69, LW V, 316, 24–25; n. 73, LW V, 317, 14–16; and Proc. Col. II n. 98, LW V, 341, 13, 15–17); n. 51 (= Proc. Col. I n. 15, LW V, 307, 18–19, 20–26; 22, LW V, 309, 5–9; n. 50, LW V, 314, 3–6; n. 54, LW V, 314, 11–15; n. 61, LW V, 315, 12–23; n. 70, LW V, 317, 6–8; n. 102, LW V, 285, 10–11), n. 81 (= Proc. Col. I n. 10, LW V, 306, 24–28).

⁹⁴ See Loris Sturlese, "Meister Eckharts Weiterwirken" (note 9 above); See Nadia Bray, "Meister Eckhart und Heinrich Seuse," 107–18, see 111–12; See Nadia Bray, "Meister Eckhart and Dietrich of Freiberg in the *Opus Ior* of Jordan of Quedlinburg," *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* 83 (2004), 47–52; Jordan of Quedlinburg, *Opus Ior: Registrum sermonum, Tabula contentorum per ordinem alphabeti*, ed. Nadia Bray, Centre of Medieval Culture 13 (Pisa: 2005); Jeremiah Hackett, "The Reception of Meister Eckhart: Mysticism, Philosophy and Theology in Henry of Friemar (the Elder) and Jordanus of Quedlinburg" (note 83 above), 554–86.

⁹⁵ Jordan von Quedlinburg, *Opus postillarum* 69 A, ed. Bray, 23, 5–12 (= Bonaventura, In Ioann. I 9, Quaracchi, 248b); n. 70 A, ed. Bray, 47, 11–14 (= In Ioann. I 18, Quaracchi, 250b); n. 71 A, ed. Bray, 51, 5–11 (= In Ioann. I 24, Quaracchi, 251b); n. 73 A, ed. Bray, 65, 5–10 (= In Ioann. I 27, Quaracchi, 252a); n. 74, ed. Bray, 75, 1–8 (= In Ioann. I 29, Quaracchi, 252b); 75A, ed. Bray, 83, 1–5 (= In Ioann. I 35, Quaracchi, 254).

doctrines,⁹⁶ from Albert of Padua the doctrines on the intellectual nature of God,⁹⁷ and finally from Eckhart not only the moral exegesis,⁹⁸ as was previously thought, but also a more heterogeneous series of quotations.

⁹⁶ Jordan von Quedlinburg, *Opus postillarum* 69 L, ed. Bray, p. 35, 313–19 (= Henricus de Gandavo, *Summa quaestionum ordinariam*, I 2; Wilson, 34, 111–35, 121); 35, 320–21 (= *Summa quaest. Ord.* I 2; Wilson, 36, 155–58); 35, 321–22 (= *Summa quaest. Ord.* I 2; Wilson, 34, 131–35, 136); 35, 323–25 (= *Summa quaest. Ord.* I 2; Wilson, 35, 121–23, 35, 156–57); *Opus postillarum* 69 M, ed. Bray, 35, 327–30 (= *Summa quaest. Ord.* I 2; Wilson, 40, 232–38); 35, 331–34 (= *Summa quaest. ord.* I 2; Wilson, 41, 260–42, 265); 35, 334–37 (= *Summa quaest. Ord.* I 2; Wilson, 43, 282–83, 289–90); 36, 338–43 (*Summa quaest. Ord.* I 2; Wilson, 44, 316–45, 323); 69 N, ed. Bray, 36, 344–48 (= *Summa quaest. Ord.* I 2; Wilson, 43, 323–28); 36, 349–53 (= *Summa quaest. Ord.* I 2; Wilson, 43, 374–77, 417–18); 36, 354–59 (= *Summa quaest. Ord.* I 2; Wilson, 50, 431–51, 434, 447–49); 36, 359–62 (= *Summa quaest. Ord.* I 2; Wilson, 52, 457–59); 37, 363–64 (= *Summa quaest. Ord.* I 2; Wilson, 50, 422–24); 37, 364–68 (= *Summa quaest. ord.* I 2; Wilson, 54, 490–92); 37, 368–72 (= *Summa quaest. Ord.* I 2; Wilson, 59, 586–89); 69 O, ed. Bray, 37, 374–84 (= *Summa quaest. Ord.* I 2; Wilson, 57, 539–50); 69 T, ed. Bray, 41, 479–82 (= *Summa quaest. Ord.* I 2; Wilson, 83, 282–86); 41, 482–85 (= *Summa quaest. Ord.* I 2; Wilson, 84, 290–94); 41, 487–96 (= *Summa quaest. Ord.* I 2; Wilson, 84, 309–85, 323).

⁹⁷ See Jordan von Quedlinburg, *Opus postillarum* n. 68 A, ed. Bray, 14, 39–46, 15, 49–51 (= Albertus de Padua, *Opus expositionum*, Sermo 11 E, Ulmae 1480, f. 39r); n. 68 F, ed. Bray, 17, 119–21, 18, 126–27 (= *Opus expos.*, Sermo 11 E, Ulmae 1480, f. 39r); n. 69 B, ed. Bray, 24, 35–42, 44–46 (= *Opus expos.*, Sermo 11 E, Ulmae 1480, f. 39v); n. 69 E, ed. Bray, 30, 197–205, 33, 208 (= *Opus expos.*, Sermo 11 G, Ulmae 1480, f. 40v); n. 69 H, ed. Bray, 32, 265–33, 278 (= *Opus expos.*, Sermo 11 H, Ulmae 1480, f. 40v); n. 69 I, ed. Bray, 33, 279–85 (= *Opus expos.*, Sermo 11 H, Ulmae 1480, f. 40v–41r); n. 69 K, ed. Bray, 34, 304–10 (= *Opus expos.*, Sermo 11 I, Ulmae 1480, f. 41r); n. 69 Q, ed. Bray, 38, 400–04 (= *Opus expos.*, Sermo 11 R, Ulmae 1480, f. 41r); n. 69 R, ed. Bray, 39, 424–29 (*Opus expos.*, Sermo 11 R, Ulmae 1480, f. 41r); n. 70 A, ed. Bray, 47, 21–22 (= *Opus expos.*, Sermo 11 L, Ulmae 1480, f. 41v); n. 70 B, ed. Bray, 49, 50–53 (= *Opus expos.*, Sermo 11 L, Ulmae 1480, f. 41v–42r); 49, 63–66 (= *Opus expos.*, Sermo 11 M, Ulmae 1480, f. 42r); n. 71 F, ed. Bray, 56, 152–56 (= *Opus expos.*, Sermo 11 M, Ulmae 1480, f. 42r); n. 71 G, ed. Bray, 57, 169–71 (= *Opus expos.*, Sermo 11 M, Ulmae 1480, f. 42r); n. 72 C, ed. Bray, 62, 76–84, n. 73 A, 66, 24–2, n. 73 F, ed. Bray, 70, 131–32, n. 73 H, ed. Bray, 74, 238–50 (= *Opus expos.*, Sermo 11 P, Ulmae 1480, f. 43r); n. 74 B, ed. Bray, 77, 63–67, 78, 76–78, 82–85, 89–91 (= *Opus expos.*, Sermo 11 T, Ulmae 1480, f. 44r); n. 74 C, ed. Bray, 79, 107–09, 126–29 (= *Opus expos.*, Sermo 11 S, Ulmae 1480, f. 43v); n., 74 D, ed. Bray, 80, 129–30, 137–42 (= *Opus expos.*, Sermo 11 S, Ulmae 1480, f. 44r); n. 74 E, ed. Bray, 81, 175–76 (= *Opus expos.*, Sermo 11 T, Ulmae 1480, f. 44v); n. 75 A, ed. Bray, 83, 9–11, n. 75 B, ed. Bray, 84, 20–21, 38–42, n. 75 C, ed. Bray, 85, 43–44 (= *Opus expos.*, Sermo 11 V, Ulmae 1480, f. 44v); n. 75 C, ed. Bray, 85, 44–52 (= *Opus expos.*, Sermo 11 T, Ulmae 1480, f. 44v); n. 75 E, ed. Bray, 87, 94–88, 114 (= *Opus expos.*, Sermo 11 Y, Ulmae 1480, f. 45v).

⁹⁸ See Jordan von Quedlinburg, *Opus postillarum*, n. 68 M, ed. Bray, 21, 228–22, 246 (= Eckhart, *In Ioh.* n. 51, LW III, 41, 15–42, 3); 69 G, ed. Bray, 31, 218–22 (= *In Ioh.* n. 68, LW III, 56, 7–57, 14); 69 P, ed. Bray, 38, 389–97 (= *In Ioh.* n. 69, LW III, 57, 15–58, 9); 69 Y, ed. Bray, 44, 572–45, 601 (*In Ioh.* n. 76, LW III, 64, 1–66, 4); 69 Z, ed. Bray, 45, 602–46, 628 (= *In Ioh.* n. 76, LW III, 65, 5–10; n. 77, LW III, 65, 11–66, 4; n. 78, LW III, 66, 5–11, 67, 1–5, 68, 7–69, 1); 71 B, ed. Bray, 53, 51–57 (= *In Ioh.* n. 95, LW III, 82, 5–7); 71 E, ed. Bray, 55, 118–129 (*In Ioh.* n. 90, LW III, 77, 9–78, 7); 72 D, ed. Bray, 62, 86–64, 127 (= *In Ioh.* n. 105, LW III, 90, 1–4); 74 B, ed. Bray, 78, 92–99 (= *In Ioh.* n. 116, LW III, 101, 4–11); 75 D, ed. Bray, 86, 84–89 (= *In Ioh.* n. 123, LW III, 107, 9–7).

Let us consider, as an example of the text, Sermon 69⁹⁹ on the pericope *Omnia per ipsum facta sunt et sine ipso factum est nihil. Quod factum est, in ipso vita erat, et vita erat lux hominum et lux in tenebris lucet, et tenebrae eam non comprehenderunt* (Ioh. 1:2). The writer implicitly quoted nine passages from Eckhart's *Expositio in Iohannem*. In paragraphs A and B, dedicated to the exegesis of the sentence *Omnia per ipsum facta sunt*, there were three Eckhart quotations: two were semantic explanations of the headword *omnia*,¹⁰⁰ and the third identified the divine Word with the first cause.¹⁰¹ In paragraph E, dedicated to the sentence *Quod factum est, in ipso vita erat* (paragraphs D–G), there were two quotations: the first explained the meaning of the verb *vivere*,¹⁰² the second clarified the biblical versicle in accordance with the law of the formal cause: the Word, that is the life, was understood as a formal cause of creatures, which in their turn live because of the effect of life.¹⁰³

In paragraph P, the moral commentary of *Et vita erat lux hominum* (paragraphs H–P) was from Eckhart.¹⁰⁴ There were also four quotations in paragraphs S, U, Y, and Z about *Et lux in tenebris lucet et tenebrae eam non comprehenderunt* (paragraphs Q–Z): S and U explained the versicle depending on the naturalistic metaphor of the light that could shine only in a medium, that is, in an opaque body.¹⁰⁵ The last two, in Y and in Z, were once again moral descriptions of the versicle.¹⁰⁶

Analyzed in accordance with Löser's criteria, the typology of Eckhart's quotations in the Christmas cycle of the *Opus postillarum* included,

⁹⁹ See Jordan von Quedlinburg, *Opus postillarum*, n. 69, ed. Bray, 23–46.

¹⁰⁰ See Jordan von Quedlinburg, *Opus postillarum*, n. 69 A, ed. Bray, 24, 31–33 (= Meister Eckhart, *In Ioh.* 52, LW III, 44, 68); n. 69 B, ed. Bray, 26, 78–81 (*In Ioh.* n. 52, LW III, 43, 13–44, 3).

¹⁰¹ See Jordan von Quedlinburg, *Opus postillarum*, n. 69 B, ed. Bray, 25, 64–77 (= Meister Eckhart, *In Ioh.* n. 52, LW III, 43, 5–12).

¹⁰² See Jordan von Quedlinburg, *Opus postillarum*, n. 69 G, ed. Bray, 31, 218–22 (= Meister Eckhart, *In Ioh.* n. 68, LW III, 56, 7–57, 14).

¹⁰³ See Jordan von Quedlinburg, *Opus postillarum*, n. 69 E, ed. Bray, 29, 184–92 (= Meister Eckhart, *In Ioh.* n. 66, LW III, 54, 6–55, 2).

¹⁰⁴ See Jordan von Quedlinburg, *Opus postillarum*, n. 69 P, ed. Bray, 38, 389–97 (= Meister Eckhart, *In Ioh.* n. 69, LW III, 57, 15–58, 9).

¹⁰⁵ See Jordan von Quedlinburg, *Opus postillarum*, n. 69 S, ed. Bray, 40, 448–54 (= Meister Eckhart, *In Ioh.* n. 70, LW III, 58, 11–12, 59, 4–10); n. 69 U, ed. Bray, 42, 506–17 (= *In Ioh.* n. 74, LW III, 62, 3–5, 9–12, 5–9).

¹⁰⁶ See Jordan von Quedlinburg, *Opus postillarm*, n. 69 Y, ed. Bray, 44, 572–45, 601 (= Meister Eckhart, *In Ioh.* n. 76, LW III, 64, 1–66, 4); 69 Z, ed. Bray, 45, 602–46, 628 (= *In Ioh.* n. 76, LW III, 65, 5–10; n. 77, LW III, 65, 11–66, 4; n. 78, LW III, 66, 5–11, 67, 1–5, 68, 7–69, 1).

therefore, moral,¹⁰⁷ philosophical,¹⁰⁸ and semantic¹⁰⁹ exegesis. A separate category was then represented by passages that collected quotations of intermediate, mostly biblical, sources.¹¹⁰ At first sight, the writer seems to be a passionate and faithful witness to Eckhart's doctrines. In reality, as in the case of Marquard of Lindau, Jordan's sharing of Eckhart's reasons was not unconditional. In fact:

1. Even if he was fascinated by the idea of finding a certain consonance between the Holy Scriptures and the *dicta philosophorum*, he showed some reservations about Eckhart's more original hermeneutical principle and plan, in which he interpreted the Word of God by means of the natural reasons of the philosophers. In *Opus postillarum* n. 76, in fact, in quoting the prologue of Eckhart's *Expositio in Iohannem*, Jordan not only omit-

¹⁰⁷ See Jordan von Quedlinburg, *Opus postillarum* n. 69 G, ed. Bray, 31, 218–22 (= *In Ioh.*, n. 68, LW III, 56, 7–57, 14); 69 P, ed. Bray, 38, 389–97 (= *In Ioh.*, n. 69, LW III, 57, 15–58, 9); 69 Y, ed. Bray, 44, 572–45, 601 (= *In Ioh.*, n. 76, LW III, 64, 1–66, 4); 69 Z, ed. Bray, 45, 602–46, 628 (= *In Ioh.*, 76, LW III, 65, 5–10; n. 77, LW III, 65, 11–66, 4; n. 78, LW III, 66, 5–11, 67, 1–5, 68, 7–69, 1).

¹⁰⁸ See Jordan von Quedlinburg, *Opus postillarum* n. 69 B, ed. Bray, 25, 64–77 (= Meister Eckhart, *In Ioh.*, n. 52, LW III, 43, 5–12); n. 69 E, ed. Bray, 29, 184–92 (= *In Ioh.*, n. 66, LW III, 54, 6–55, 2); n. 69 S, ed. Bray, 40, 448–54 (= *In Ioh.*, n. 70, LW III, 58, 11–12, 59, 4–10), 69 U, ed. Bray, 42, 506–17 (= *In Ioh.*, n. 74, LW III, 62, 3–5, 9–12, 5–9); n. 74 E, ed. Bray, 81, 159–60 (= *In Ioh.*, n. 6, LW III, 7, 13–8, 1); n. 76, ed. Bray, 90, 35–36. (= *In Ioh.*, n. 4, LW III, 5, 7–7, 9); 91, 55–56 (= *In Ioh.*, n. 6, LW III, 8, 1–2); 91, 61–63 (= n. 7, LW III, 8, 6–8); 91, 67–69 (= n. 9, LW III, 10, 5–10); 91, 50–51 (= *In Ioh.*, n. 36, LW III, 32, 4–5); 90, 48–91, 50 (= n. 135, LW III, 115, 13–16); 91, 60–70 (= *In Ioh.*, *tabula*, 652, 5–9); 92, 87–94 (= *In Ioh.* n. 20, LW III, 17, 10–18, 2; n. 21, LW III, 18, 7–8; n. 140, LW III, 118, 5–8); 93, 109–11 (= *In Ioh.* n. 152, LW III, 126, 3–6).

¹⁰⁹ See Jordan von Quedlinburg, *Opus postillarum* n. 68, ed. Bray, 19, 170–20, 187 (= Meister Eckhart, *In Ioh.* n. 33, LW III, 26, 12–14, 27, 1–6); 20, 201–07 (= *In Ioh.* n. 8, LW III, 9, 3–7); 20, 209–11 (= *In Ioh.* n. 8, LW III, 8, 13–9, 1); n. 69 A, ed. Bray, 24, 31–34 (= Meister Eckhart, *In Ioh.* 52, LW III, 44, 68), n. 69 B, ed. Bray, 26, 78–81 (= *In Ioh.* n. 52, LW III, 43, 13–44, 3); n. 69 G, ed. Bray, 31, 218–22 (= *In Ioh.* n. 68, LW III, 56, 7–57, 14); n. 71, ed. Bray, 51, 23–52, 1 (= *In Ioh.* n. 87, LW III, 75, 3–8); n. 73 C, ed. Bray, 67, 73–68, 76 (= *In Ioh.* n. 154, LW III, 127, 7–127, 10); n. 79, ed. Bray, 102, 5–7 (= *In Ioh.* n. 8, 8, 13–9, 7).

¹¹⁰ See Jordan von Quedlinburg, *Opus postillarum* n. 68 I, ed. Bray, 19, 172–78 (= Eckhart, *In Ioh.* n. 34, LW III, 28, 4–9); n. 71 A, ed. Bray, 52, 25–27 (= *In Ioh.* n. 86, LW III, 74, 6–8); n. 72 A, ed. Bray, 54, 89 (= *In Ioh.* n. 95, LW III, 82, 9–11); n. 71 D, ed. Bray, 54, 99–102 (= *In Ioh.* n. 88, LW III, 76, 5–11); n. 72 A, ed. Bray, 59, 15–19 (= *In Ioh.* n. 98, LW III, 84, 6–11); 59, 20–60, 32 (= *In Ioh.* n. 101–02, LW III, 87, 6–88, 5); 60, 33–37 (= n. 103, LW III, 88, 12–89, 11); 60, 38–48 (= n. 113, LW III, 97, 14–98, 3); n. 73 C, ed. Bray, 67, 68–72 (= *In Ioh.* n. 111, LW III, 95, 13–96, 17); 68, 80–89 (= *In Ioh.* n. 111, LW III, 96, 3–13); n. 73 E, ed. Bray, 70, 144–52 (= *In Ioh.* n. 107, LW III, 91, 5–93, 11); n. 73 F, ed. Bray, 71, 53–55 (= *In Ioh.* n. 107, LW III, 91, 1–92, 3); 71, 155–64 (= *In Ioh.* n. 107, LW III, 92, 7–93, 4); 71, 167–76 (= *In Ioh.* n. 107, LW III, 94, 2–12); n. 110, LW III, 94, 15–95, 1); n. 74 B, ed. Bray, 76, 49–77, 56 (= Eckhart, *in Ioh.* n. 116, LW III, 101, 2–4); n. 76 A, ed. Bray, 89, 3–13 (= *In Ioh.* n. 2, LW III, 2, 4–13); 90, 33–34 (= *In Ioh.* n. 3, LW III, 4, 14–17); n. 76 B, ed. Bray, 92, 73–75 (= *In Ioh.* n. 10, LW III, 10, 11–14); n. 76 B, ed. Bray, 92, 77–83 (= *In Ioh.* n. 139, LW III, 117, 9–10, 14, 118, 1–4); 93, 95–100 (= *In Ioh.* n. 141, LW III, 119, 1–5); n. 78 A, ed. Bray, 96, 4–7 (= *In Ioh.*, *proem.*, LW III, 3, 1–7).

ted Eckhart's main declaration, that is to interpret the Bible *per rationes philosophorum*, but he also attributed to theology rather than to philosophy his comprehension of the "veritates principiorum, conclusionum et proprietatum rerum naturalium."¹¹¹

2. He left out the more original of Eckhart's theories. From the *Expositio in Iohannem*, for example, he omitted entirely a series of paragraphs in which appear, among other things, the subject of the *quidditas rerum* (nn. 11–12; nn. 28–32), the *iustitia* (nn. 14–19; n. 85), the *imago* (nn. 23–27; nn. 37–38; nn. 46–50), the transcendental (nn. 63–64; n. 97; n. 114), the relationship between generation and alteration (n. 67; nn. 124–31), the divine origin (n. 106, n. 117–21), and the beatifical vision (n. 108).

3. He undoubtedly kept his distance from some of Eckhart's doctrines. In *Opus postillarum* n. 73 E, as was well known, he criticized some condemned theses on the spiritual generation of the Word and he mentioned the relevant sentence of Pope John XXII. The theses condemned were clearly by Meister Eckhart, that is, as was stated earlier, articles XI, XII, XIII, and XX of the bull *In agro dominico*.¹¹²

The debate on Eckhart's doctrines in the *Opus Ior* was more carefully constructed. The work was studied for the first time by Koch, who in 1961 identified interesting quotations from Eckhart's condemned doctrines: the divine spiritual birth, the nullity of creatures, the image of God in the human soul, and the uncreated nature of mind.¹¹³ In 1992 Sturlese discovered in three different sermons of the same work polemical references to central doctrines of Dietrich of Freiberg.¹¹⁴

In *Opus Ior* n. 50, 51, 52—sermons for the first Sunday after Christmas—the writer expounded the pericope *Quoniam estis filii Dei, misit Deus spiritum filii sui in corda vestra* (Gal. 4:6–7) and he quoted them literally from one of the most well-known documents of the trial of Cologne, that is, Eckhart's *Responsio*; he criticized the doctrines on the divine origin of man. According to Eckhart, man must be Son of God because: (1) he was

¹¹¹ See Jordan von Quedlinburg, *Opus postillarum* n. 76, ed. Bray, 90, 33–38 (= Eckhart, *In Ioh.*, nn. 3–4, LW III, 4, 4–6., 14–17).

¹¹² See Jordan von Quedlinburg, *Opus postillarum* n. 73 E, ed. Bray, 69, 105–11 (= Bulla "In agro dominico," *Acta Echardiana* n. 65, art. XXI; LW V, 599, 70–71; art. XI; LW V, 598, 47–49; art. XII, LW V, 598, 50–51).

¹¹³ See Koch, "Jordanus von Quedlinburg," 658.

¹¹⁴ See Sturlese, "Meister Eckharts Weiterwirken," 111–12; Alain de Libera, "Albert le Grand et la mystique allemande," in *Philosophy and Learning: Universities in the Middle Ages*, ed. M.J.F.M.H. Hoenen, J.H.J. Schneider, and G. Wieland (Leiden: 1995), 40–41.

procreated by God in conformity with his nature, (2) he was granted the divine image, and (3) he was transformed completely in God by grace.¹¹⁵

Unlike what happens in the *Opus postillarum*, nevertheless, in the *Opus Ior* Jordan did not restrict himself to condemning the theories of the Dominican master, but he tried to understand their speculative assumptions and, sometimes, he tried to save one of their possible interpretations in the orthodox sense. Specifically:

1. The idea that man is Son of God by virtue of the eternal generation could be claimed to be founded on the following doctrine of Anselm of Aosta: “by the same Word through which God pronounces himself he even pronounces each creature.” Eckhart’s interpretation of Anselm’s saying nevertheless ignored that, while the Son proceeds from the divine being and so is of the same nature as the Father, creatures proceed from the divine will and therefore they are of a different nature. It follows that man, as creature, cannot be God’s son by nature but only by adoption.

2. The idea that man is God’s son because of the divine image engraved on the human soul is valid, if the right way of interpreting the doctrine of image is precisely defined. If image means a *virtus* or *potentia* of soul, uncreated and uncreatable, consubstantial with God and therefore able to contain it within itself¹¹⁶—this was Eckhart’s position—the doctrine certainly sounded heretical. Nevertheless, Jordan explained that the uncreated *virtus* of Eckhart fell within the definition of image if it was identified with the agent intellect. As uncreated virtue, as specified by Jordan, the agent intellect is a true substance, and thus is not a faculty of the soul. Least of all, contrary to the doctrine of Dietrich of Freiberg, is it the essence of the soul. On the contrary, God himself operates in the soul to allow knowledge, but in no way does He belong to its being.

3. The idea that man by virtue of grace becomes the only begotten Son of God, after all, must be completely rejected because both the formulation and the examples propose the absurd concept of the deification of man through the conversion of substance.

In *Opus Ior* nn. 81–82—sermons for the fifth Sunday of Quadragesima—Jordan expounded the following pericope: “Cum venerit quod perfectum est, tunc evacuabitur quod ex parte est” (1 Cor. 12, 13), and he tackled the subject of the perfection of soul. Jordan in *Opus Ior* nn. 50 and 51 again

¹¹⁵ See Jordan von Quedlinburg, *Opus Ior* n. 50 A, ed. Bray, 111, 12–19 (= *Processus Coloniensis* II n. 98, LW V, 341, 15–17); n. 50 C, 115, 110–16 (= *Processus Colonensis* I n. 63, LW V, p. 315, 30–316, 3); n. 51 A, p. 121, 1–7 (= *Processus Coloniensis* I 50, LW V, 314, 5–6).

¹¹⁶ See Jordan von Quedlinburg, *Opus Ior* n. 50 C, ed. Bray, 116, 136–40.

criticizes Eckhart's doctrines of deification¹¹⁷ and Theodoric Freiberg's doctrine of the agent intellect. In particular, it is from Eckhart's doctrine on *imago*, according to Jordan, that an erroneous concept of the perfection of soul as *esse naturae* derives.

For the soul, since it is a creature, is imperfect and, even better, it is a nothing. Consequently, to conquer its imperfection it must deny itself as creature to be converted completely into the uncreated image, that is, into God. Further, Eckhart held the absurd idea according to which the soul, by virtue of the *esse gratiae*,¹¹⁸ could unite with God to deify itself. Finally, it is from Dietrich of Freiberg's definition of the agent intellect that the thesis according to which the highest perfection of the soul consists in the direct vision of God, that is without the mediation of *lumen gloriae*,¹¹⁹ is derived.

As has been shown, the reception of Eckhart's doctrines in Jordan is multifaceted. Eckhart was accepted in two ways: literally, in the Christmas cycle of the *Opus postillarum*, where the doctrines of the *Commentary on St. John's Gospel* is made to agree with the truths established by the church; and through different ways to understand the meaning, as in sermon 50 of the *Opus Ior*, to diminish the radical nature of some positions and to exorcize them of their dangerous cultural potential. Well, then, there is only one way to refute it: unmask the paradoxes and point out mistakes where Eckhart's clarity is expressed through precise examples that do not allow debates on the interpretation. As we have seen, this was the case where Jordan refers to the doctrine on the unity of the creature with God.

More evidence of Eckhart's reception comes from Johannes Hiltalingen of Basel. The Augustinian, having studied at Avignon, was lector in the *Studium generale* of Strasbourg. In Paris he commented upon the *Sentences* in 1365–66, he expounded the *quaestiones disputate* in 1368, and he gained the qualification of master of theology in 1371. From 1371 he was provincial of the Rhine-Swabian Province, in 1377 he was procurator of the order, in 1379 he was general, and in 1389 he was named bishop of Lombès in Southern France by Pope Clemente VII. He died in 1392.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Jordan von Quedlinburg, *Opus Ior* n. 81 A, ed. Bray, 137, 17–25.

¹¹⁸ Jordan von Quedlinburg, *Opus Ior* n. 81 C, ed. Bray, 140, 88–95.

¹¹⁹ Jordan von Quedlinburg, *Opus Ior* n. 82, ed. Bray, 144, 6–8.

¹²⁰ See A. Kunzelmann, *Geschichte der deutschen Augustiner-Eremiten*. Zweiter Teil: Die rheinisch-schwäbische Provinz bis zum Ende des Mittelalters, (Cassiciacum) 26 (Würzburg: 1970), 206–13.

It was also Koch¹²¹ who identified the *De decem responsionibus* and the *Commentary on the Sentences* of Hiltalingen as evidence of how Eckhart was received. Koch showed that the Augustinian quoted Eckhart's doctrines according to the formulations of one particular document from the trial against Eckhart, known as *Guthachten* of Cardinal Fournier.¹²² In 2004 Karl Heinz Witte looked again at the materials Koch had worked on and suggested at least two new basic results: (1) the references to Eckhart's doctrines were not simple erudite quotations, but constituent elements of some of the questions discussed both in *De decem responsionibus* and in the *Commentary on the Sentences* of John Hiltalingen; and (2) the Augustinian did not limit himself to taking up a position against the Eckhartian doctrines contested by the inquisitors,¹²³ since in some cases he even suggested an alternative interpretation with an orthodox meaning.

Let us consider as a textual example *De decem responsionibus*, *quaestio* n. 4, where John Hiltalingen debated on God or the Supreme Intelligence, which for the writer were the same, that is, the first cause of the Word in the same way as the prime cause of creatures and, in particular where he confronted the subject of the eternity of creation. In fact, supposing that the question has been settled affirmatively it is possible to find ourselves facing an embarrassing choice: either God originated the Word as he did the creatures, thus, in time, or vice versa God originated the creatures as he did the Word, and thus in eternity. Neither of the two choices was orthodox: John Hiltalingen records it referring explicitly to Pope Benedict's declarations with regard to the first three articles against

¹²¹ See Joseph Koch, "Der Kardinal Fournier (Benedikt XII.) als Gutachter in theologischen Prozessen," *Kleine Schriften* 2, (Storia e Letteratura) 128 (Rome: 1973), 367–86; Koch, "Kritische Studien zum Leben Meister Eckharts," *Kleine Schriften*, vol. 2, 247–347. The basic declaration of such documents agree with those of Votum of the Avignonesse theologians, published first by Pelster and then by Sturlese: see Votum, ed. F. Pelster, "Ein Gutachten aus dem Eckehart-Prozeß in Avignon," *Aus dere Geisteswelt des Mittelalters*, (BGPTM) 2, 2 (Münster: 1935), 1099–1124. New edition in *Acta Echariana* n. 59 (ed. L. Sturlese, LW V).

¹²² Votum, see F. Pelster, *Ibid.*, Münster 1935, 1099–1124. See the new edition in *Acta Echariana* n. 59 (ed. L. Sturlese, LW V).

¹²³ See Hiltalingen, *Sent.* 3, q. 13, concl. 1, cor. 3 and ad princ. 1, ed. Witte 369, 876–370, 900 (= Votum art. 26, *Acta Echariana* n. 59, 101, LW V, 588, 1–5 about the love of God without difference); Hiltalingen, *De decem responsionibus*, q. 4, notable 5, ed. Witte, 356, 436–357, 456 (= Votum art. 5, *Acta Echariana* n. 59, n. 26, LW V, 573, 4–6 about God who is not good, better, nor excellent); Hiltalingen, *De decem responsionibus*, q. 6, notable 7, ed. Witte, 371, 903–14 (= Votum art. 14, *Acta Echariana* n. 59, n. 53–57, LW V, 577, 20–578, 11, about the efficacy of a prayer); Hiltalingen, *De decem responsionibus*, q. 1, ed. Witte, 371, 917–26 (= Votum, art. 15, *Acta Echariana* n. 59, nn. 58–60, LW V, 573, 4–6 about the names of God).

Eckhart.¹²⁴ In the second appendix of the same question the Augustinian quoted literally the first two articles of the trial against Eckhart, still in accordance with the formulation of Cardinal Fournier's document,¹²⁵ this time to supply an orthodox interpretation of Eckhart's doctrines as an alternative to that given in the papal bull *In agro dominico*. In fact he explained that, if in Eckhart's expression according to which "the world is from eternity," "from eternity" is interpreted in a nominal rather than adverbial way, the pope's interpretation did not fit and Eckhart's doctrine was safe.¹²⁶

Another textual example is found in *De decem responsionibus*, question 1. He debated the following question: "Utrum dei et purissimae Mariae virginis filius qualibet dignitate simpliciter perfectionis formaliter sit immensus."¹²⁷ The subject of the investigation was the hypostatical combination of the human and the divine that was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, but the question regarded, generally, the possibility of ascribing divine characteristics to man. In the second conclusion, John Hiltalingen declared the existence of only one son consubstantial with God and a lot of adopted sons.¹²⁸ In the appendices he quoted articles 17–23 of Cardinal Fournier's document and described Meister Eckhart's position as a doctrine that is mistaken.¹²⁹ The Dominican, according to the inquisitors, had absurdly

¹²⁴ See Johannes Hiltalingen von Basel, *De decem responsionibus*, q. 4, princ. 3, ed. Witte, 345, 14–24.

¹²⁵ See Johannes Hiltalingen von Basel, *De decem responsionibus*, q. 4, cor. 2, ed. Witte, 351, 235–36.

¹²⁶ See Johannes Hiltalingen von Basel, *De decem responsionibus*, q. 4, cor. 2, ed. Witte, 351, 239–50.

¹²⁷ See Johannes Hiltalingen von Basel, *De decem responsionibus*, q. 1, ed. Witte, 357, 460–63.

¹²⁸ See Johannes Hiltalingen von Basel, *De decem responsionibus*, q. 1, concl. 2, ed. Witte, 358, 470–74.

¹²⁹ See Johannes Hiltalingen von Basel, *De decem responsionibus*, q. 1, ed. Witte, 359, 527–28 (= *Votum* a. 17, *Acta Echardiana* n. 59, n. 65, LW V, 580, 10–11); Johannes Hiltalingen von Basel, *De decem responsionibus*, q. 1, ed. Witte, 359, 530–32 (= *Votum* a. 18, *Acta Echardiana* n. 59, n. 66, LW V, 580, 12–13); Johannes Hiltalingen von Basel, *De decem responsionibus*, q. 1, ed. Witte, 360, 545–46 (= *Votum post art* 18, *Acta Echardiana* n. 59, n. 68, LW V, 580, 25–27); See Johannes Hiltalingen von Basel, *De decem responsionibus*, q. 1, ed. Witte, 360, 546–49 (= *Votum post art* 18, *Acta Echardiana* n. 59, n. 72, LW V, 581, 19–20); Johannes Hiltalingen von Basel, *De decem responsionibus*, q. 1, ed. Witte, 361, 584–94 (= *Votum* a. 19, *Acta Echardiana*, n. 59, n. 70, LW V, 581, 8–10); Johannes Hiltalingen von Basel, *De decem responsionibus*, q. 1, ed. Witte, 359, 584–94 (= *Votum* a. 19, *Acta Echardiana* n. 59, n. 72, LW V, 581, 17–20); Johannes Hiltalingen von Basel, *De decem responsionibus*, q. 1, ed. Witte, 361, 598–605 (= *Votum* a. 20, *Acta Echardiana* n. 59, n. 74, LW V, 582, 6–9); Johannes Hiltalingen von Basel, *De decem responsionibus*, q. 1, ed. Witte, 362, 608–12 (= *Votum* a. 21, *Acta Echardiana* n. 59, n. 79, LW V, 583, 2–4); Johannes Hiltalingen von Basel, *De decem*

identified the good (art. 17), and noble man (art. 18), with the only begotten Son of God; he had declared them the same without any distinction (art. 19); he had supported the deification of the true man as the transubstantiation of the Eucharist (art. 20), thus attributing to the good man the same nature as Christ (art. 21), and even his same biography (art. 22), and even his same power to create (art. 22). Even though he shared substantially the subjects attributed to the Dominican, on two points Hiltalingen suggested a personal interpretation of Eckhart's doctrines. Eckhart had maintained that: "the Only-Begotten Son is *He for whom* all believers are sons by adoption" and also that "what is typical of divine nature is *completely typical* of the just and divine man." In both the expressions Hiltalingen believed himself able to distinguish two senses: one, depending on the sound of the words, which was the wrong sense; the other, depending on a certain meaning of terms, on the other hand, was the orthodox meaning. The orthodox or heretical nature of the expression "the Only-Begotten Son is *He for whom* all believers are sons by adoption" depended on the meaning of the *one for which*. The orthodox or heretical nature of the expression "what is typical of the divine nature is *completely typical* of the just and divine man" depended on the meaning of *typical*. Through slim linguistic distinctions Hiltalingen established for both of Eckhart's formulations an orthodox meaning. So, when it is said that Christ is the one for whom all believers become adopted sons, it is established that the only begotten Son is the cause: only if for "cause" is meant the "formal cause," is Eckhart's thesis incorrect, but if for cause we want to say "efficient cause," Eckhart's declaration was completely orthodox.¹³⁰ In the same way, when it is said that "what is given to Christ" or "that which proper to divine nature" is also proper to the just man, the doctrine is

responsionibus, q. 1, ed. Witte, 362, 612–16 (= *Votum* a. 21, *Acta Echardiana* n. 59, n. 21, LW V, 583, 11–14); Johannes Hiltalingen von Basel, *De decem responsionibus*, q. 1, ed. Witte, 363, 665–67 (= *Votum* a. 22, *Acta Echardiana* n. 59, n. 83, LW V, 584, 2–3); Johannes Hiltalingen von Basel, *De decem responsionibus*, q. 1, ed. Witte, 363, 668–69 (= *Votum post* a. 22, *Acta Echardiana* n. 59, n. 85, LW V, 584, 12); Johannes Hiltalingen von Basel, *De decem responsionibus*, q. 1, ed. Witte, 363, 677–364, 679 (= *Votum post* a. 22, *Acta Echardiana* n. 59, n. 84, LW V, 584, 8–12); Johannes Hiltalingen von Basel, *De decem responsionibus*, q. 1, ed. Witte, 364, 683–90 (= *Votum* a. 23, *Acta Echardiana* n. 59, n. 87, LW V, 584, 26–29); See Johannes Hiltalingen von Basel, *De decem responsionibus*, q. 1, ed. Witte, 364, 694–96 (= *Votum* a. 23, *Acta Echardiana* n. 59, n. 88, LW V, 585, 5).

¹³⁰ See Johannes Hiltalingen von Basel, *De Decem responsionibus*, q. 1, ed. Witte, 360, 569–74.

completely orthodox if what is meant is that man participates by grace in the divine Christ's properties.¹³¹

As can be seen from the example used, Hiltalingen suggested an interpretation of Eckhart's doctrine based on careful linguistic distinctions: he chose the weak sense of Eckhart's contested terms and in this way reduced the dangerous meaning of his expressions. In Hiltalingen's texts, as in Jordan's texts, the Eckhartian formulations are certainly understood in their orthodox sense, but not so much in their authentic Eckhartian meaning.

"He wanted to know more than he should have, he wanted to know without moderation and overstepping all bounds of faith." Brother Eckhart—it is said in the bull *In Agro Dominico*—sowed discord in the field of God and confused the hearts of many people, most of all, the plain people. For this reason, his most original doctrines, synthesized in 23 charges, were condemned. His writings were denominated *Opuscoli*: not books of few pages, but books of little value! The handwritten tradition of Eckhart's works would seem really to document the history of his literary failure. Yet, as we have seen, the fortune especially of the Latin works, lowered to the rank of *opuscoli*, is comparable to accredited writings like the *De visione beatifica* of Dietrich of Freiberg or the *Summa theologiae* of Nicholas of Strasbourg. Eckhart in the *notandum* written at the end of his written defense denounced the incompetence of the inquisitors of Cologne who, because they did not understand, had declared his doctrines wrong. Eckhart would not lack followers who were fascinated by his writings.

Alongside the reception identified by Sturlese, that is, of Eckhart's followers in Cologne who undertook a valiant defence of Eckhart's doctrines, there exists, as Koch has already seen, a minor but important reception of Eckhart's works. Some of the Latin writings (the *Commentary on John's Gospel* and the *Commentary on Genesis*) and those in German (the *Buoch der göttlichen Trostung* and some sermons) just like some of the acts from the proceedings against Eckhart, as we have seen, were read and accepted by intellectuals belonging to different religious orders, in a polemic and peaceful way. With the sole exception of John of Dambach, OP, who used passages of the *Buoch der göttlichen Trostung* paraphrasing it in Latin, the quotations of the *Commentary on John's Gospel* that were in the *Prologue to St John's Gospel* of Marquard of Lindau (OFM) and in the *Opus postillarum*

¹³¹ See Johannes Hiltalingen von Basel, *De decem responsionibus*, q. 1, ed. Witte, 364, 697–365, 715.

of Jordan of Quedlinburg (OESA) were literal and are also interesting from a philological point of view. The same goes both for the quotations from the bull *In agro dominico* and for Eckhart's *Responsio* of Cologne that were in Jordan of Quedlinburg's sermons, and for the *Gutachten* of Cardinal Fournier, documented in John's Hiltalingen of Basel works (OESA).

The textual analysis of the quotations so far identified by the scholars, carried out in accordance with Löser's categories, seem to lead to the conclusion that most of the works show a prudent reading of Eckhart's works. The esteemed authors generally use the textual passages of Eckhart as vehicles of intermediate sources, of paradoxical expressions, of natural metaphors, and of semantic exegesis typical of Eckhart's style and method. Usually, moreover, the most original doctrines of Eckhart were omitted or otherwise included in a context that deprived them completely of their authentic Eckhartian meaning or are even explicitly criticized. The debate on Eckhart's doctrines which took place within the Order of the Friar-Hermits of Saint Augustine, in spite of being more articulate, indicates something other than an authentic defence of Eckhart's thought. The philosophical assumptions and the subtle linguistic distinctions imposed respectively by Jordan of Quedlinburg and by John Hiltalingen on the interpretation of Eckhart's certainly showed the theoretical ability of the two intellectuals, but in every way they explicitly avoided the true meaning of Eckhart's doctrines.

ECKHART AND THE VERNACULAR TRADITION: PSEUDO-ECKHART AND ECKHART LEGENDS

Dagmar Gottschall

1. PSEUDO-ECKHART

While the corpus of Eckhart's Latin oeuvre has a clearly defined extent, no such definition exists for his German oeuvre. This is due to the special situation of the transmission of his vernacular oeuvre.¹ Scholars do indeed assume today that Eckhart compiled a book of sermons in which he collected his vernacular sermons and arranged them in accordance with the feasts of the church year, revising and expanding them as required.² But Eckhart's book has not survived—still less, the final redaction by the author's own hand.

Eckhart's German sermons were very popular in the late Middle Ages, and they were transmitted in numerous manuscripts, for the most part in manuscript anthologies with other spiritual texts, fragmented into innumerable smaller pieces and either ascribed by copyists to Eckhart or anonymous authors. The question of the authenticity of many of these texts still remains open, and will be decided with their inclusion in the great Stuttgart critical edition of all the German works of Meister Eckhart.³ This essay presents an overview of the sermons that come into question

¹ On the problem of the transmission of Eckhart in general, see Georg Steer, "Die Schriften Meister Eckharts in den handschriften des Mittelalters," in Hans-Jochen Schiewer and Karl Stackmann, *Die Präsenz des Mittelalters in seinen Handschriften. Ergebnisse der Berliner Tagung in der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, 6.–8. April 2000* (Tübingen, 2002), 209–322; on the German writings, 233–81. See also Chapter Four in the present volume.

² See Loris Sturlese, "Hat es ein Corpus der deutschen Predigten Meister Eckharts gegeben? Liturgische Beobachtungen zu aktuellen philosophiehistorischen Fragen," in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt*, ed. Andreas Speer and Lydia Wegener (Berlin: 2005), 393–408.

³ To date, 110 sermons have been critically edited, and the inclusion of seven other sermons in the edition is envisaged. Eckhart's writings are cited as follows: Meister Eckhart. *Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, herausgegeben im Auftrage der Deutschen Forschungsgesellschaft. Die lateinischen Werke, Band I–V (abbreviation: LW I–V), (Stuttgart: 1956–2006); Die deutschen Werke, Band I–V (abbreviation: DW I–V), (Stuttgart: 1957–2003). Ruh assumes the existence of "roughly 150 sermons" in German: Kurt Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, 3: *Die Mystik des deutschen Predigerordens und ihre Grundlegung durch die Hochscholastik* (Munich: 1996), 223.

here, the sermons for which older scholarship claimed the authorship of Meister Eckhart.

One feature of spiritual prose is that it is often copied in excerpts; extracts are made and then composed anew in other contexts. This is the genesis of anonymous composite or “mosaic” treatises, as well as of collections of *dicta* and *sententiae*. Eckhart’s German texts were also subject to this process, which undeniably corresponded to the normal methods of study employed by the lemma commentary.⁴ It is in this context that we must see the treatises which Franz Pfeiffer included in his edition of Eckhart in the 19th century, as well as other anonymous texts “which follow on from, develop, and debate with Master Eckhart’s mysticism and theology.”⁵ There has as yet been no study of the history of transmission, the contents, or the sources of the treatises that cluster around the figure of Eckhart.

Fragments in the form of *sententiae* in which the figure of Eckhart makes an authoritative statement were collected by Franz Pfeiffer in the section “Sprüche” (“aphorisms”). Some of these can be identified as fragments from more extensive texts that are attributed to Eckhart and are authentic;⁶ these include free translations from his Latin works. But the provenance of others is completely unknown. Pfeiffer’s final section, the so-called *Liber positionum*, is particularly problematic. This has the form of a scholastic collection of *quaestiones*, and its material is transmitted, always anonymously, in a varying extent and a varying arrangement in manuscript anthologies of mystical texts.

For the sake of simplicity, scholars refer to the material described above—German sermons, treatises, and aphorisms which are either transmitted anonymously or else ascribed to Eckhart in some manuscripts, and which are regularly given a place in codices scattered among authentic texts by Eckhart—as “Pseudo-Eckhart,” although this does not exclude the possibility that it may include authentic texts by the Master. Usually, however, this material offers secondary textual attestations of writings by Meister Eckhart (i.e. when the anonymous authors quote from authentic

⁴ See Burkhard Hasebrink, “Zersetzung? Eine Neubewertung der Eckhartkompliation in Spamers Mosaiktraktaten,” in *Contemplata aliis tradere. Studien zum Verhältnis von Literatur und Spiritualität*, ed. Claudia Brinker et al. (Berlin: 1995), 353–69.

⁵ Johannes Janota, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von den Anfängen bis zum Beginn der Neuzeit*, 3: *Vom späten Mittelalter bis zum Beginn der Neuzeit, Teil 1: Orientierung durch volkssprachliche Schriftlichkeit (1280/90–1380/90)* (Tübingen: 2004), 75.

⁶ See Adolf Spamer, “Zur Überlieferung der Pfeiffer’schen Eckharttexte,” *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 34 (1909), 307–420, see 399f.

texts by Eckhart). Sometimes, we find an imitation of Meister Eckhart by admirers of the great Dominican, or a critique of his teaching composed by trained theologians who engaged in a critical debate with the incriminated affirmations of Eckhart in the aftermath of his condemnation. In all these texts, the reader is struck by the "skill with which the normally anonymous authors employ the German language."⁷ But since there has scarcely been any research into the reception of Eckhart in the late Middle Ages, it is not possible to identify precisely the position of these texts in the history of ideas.⁸

We shall now present and discuss a representative selection of the most important textual material which compilers from the days of Meister Eckhart to the beginning of the 20th century have gathered together, either under his name or anonymously.

We owe the largest collection of Eckhart texts to Franz Pfeiffer, who devoted the second volume of his two-volume edition *Deutsche Mystiker des 14. Jahrhunderts* to Meister Eckhart.⁹ Of the 113 sermons published by Pfeiffer, 28 have not yet been edited in the great Stuttgart edition.¹⁰ One sermon (Pfeiffer 109 = Steer 111) will, however, definitely be included,¹¹ and 13 others (Pfeiffer 16–17, 37, 39, 50, 57, 71.2, 76.1, 77–78, 92–93, and the supplementary sermon) have been taken into serious consideration.¹² This leaves us with 12 sermons to which the label "Pseudo-Eckhart" is attached: Pfeiffer 18, 54, 61, 67.1 and 2, 68, 70, 75, 76.2, 103–06, and 110.¹³

⁷ Janota, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, 75.

⁸ See Georg Steer, "Echtheit und Authentizität der Predigten Meister Eckharts. Schwierigkeiten und Möglichkeiten einer kritischen Edition," in *Germanistik—Forschungsstand und Perspektiven. Vorträge des Deutschen Germanistentages 1984, Teil 2: Ältere Deutsche Literatur. Neuere Deutsche Literatur*, ed. Georg Stötzel (Berlin: 1985), 41–50. The basic study on the reception of Eckhart remains Josef Koch, "Meister Eckharts Weiterwirken im deutsch-niederländischen Raum im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert" (1963), reprinted in Koch, *Kleine Schriften* 1 (Rome: 1973), 429–55. See also the recent study by Loris Sturlese, "Meister Eckharts Weiterwirken. Versuch einer Bilanz," in Sturlese, *Homo divinus. Philosophische Projekte in Deutschland zwischen Meister Eckhart und Heinrich Seuse* (Stuttgart: 2007), 107–18. Both scholars seek to identify quotations from authentic texts by Eckhart in the works of other writers.

⁹ *Meister Eckhart. Predigten und Traktate*, ed. Franz Pfeiffer (Leipzig: 1857; repr. Aalen: 1962).

¹⁰ We must completely exclude the sermon Pf. 101, which is a translation of Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1, 15.

¹¹ See Wolfgang Klimanek, *Verzeichnis der in DW IV benutzten Textzeugen und ihrer Siglen* (2005), Introduction; see www.eckhart.de.

¹² See Steer, "Die Schriften Meister Eckharts" (note 1 above), 252f.

¹³ The sermon Pf. 110, which is transmitted only in Melk, is a compilation by Lienhart Peuger from three texts: (1) an unidentified piece; (2) the 15th of the 24 *Golden Harps* of John Nider; and (3) the chapter on the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit from the *Book of the*

Pfeiffer drew his textual material from a variety of manuscripts containing mystical writings; but he did not have access to one important (though late) Strasbourg manuscript anthology. In 1875, Auguste Jundt published 18 texts from this manuscript under the name of Meister Eckhart: *Sermons et pièces diverses de Maître Eckhart*.¹⁴ The Strasbourg MS. 2795 (Str3)¹⁵ contains one of the most extensive collections of Eckhart texts from the southern German area.¹⁶ We should assume the existence of a collector who is interested in Eckhart and his circle. He included in his book, which he finished on 24 February 1440, no less than 42 sermons by Eckhart which are regarded today as authentic,¹⁷ as well as ten other texts which have not yet been edited in the great critical edition.¹⁸ He also includes the treatise *Of Two Kinds of Ways* (which is attributed both to Franke of Cologne and to Meister Eckhart, but is mostly transmitted anonymously), and questions and aphorisms. For his printing of part of Str3, Jundt selected didactic pieces in dialogue form, sermons, and texts in the form of treatises. The sermons he printed were five authentic Eckhart texts,¹⁹ as well as one further sermon the authenticity of which is under serious consideration.²⁰ This means that 12 pieces come under the rubric of "Pseudo-Eckhart:"

heavenly (hidden) divinity by Frederick the Carmelite. On this complex, see Freimut Löser, *Meister Eckhart in Melk. Studien zum Redaktor Lienhart Peuger. Mit einer Edition des Traktats "Von der sel wirdichait vnd eigenschafft"* (Tübingen: 1999), 204–10.

¹⁴ Auguste Jundt, *Histoire du panthéisme populaire au moyen âge et au seizième siècle* (Paris: 1875), 231–80. A 19th text, *Dis lerte meister Eckhart* (ibid., 280), follows an unspecified 14th-century manuscript from the private collection of Professor Charles Schmidt, Strasbourg (ibid., 210).

¹⁵ Here and in what follows, the abbreviated references to manuscripts are taken from Josef Quint (ed.), *Meister Eckhart. Die deutschen Werke, 2: Predigten* (Stuttgart: 1971), 9–17: for a preliminary list of the manuscripts used and of their abbreviated references (3rd version); see the appendix.

¹⁶ Strasbourg, Bibliothèque Nationale et Universitaire, Cod. Germ. 2795 (previously L germ. 662), Pap., 4°, 334 folios, 24 February 1440; probable provenance Augsburg, later Inzigkofen. See Klimanek, *Verzeichnis* (note 11 above).

¹⁷ See Klimanek, ibid.

¹⁸ One anonymous sermon, the text of which passes over into Quint, DW I, 10; four other unidentified sermons; Pf. 17, 76.1, and 78, the authenticity of which is under serious consideration; Pf. 61 and 18, which are regarded as Pseudo-Eckhart. See Spamer, "Zur Überlieferung" (note 6 above), 346–54.

¹⁹ These are Jundt 7 = Quint, DW III, 63; Jundt 8 = Quint, DW III, 64; Jundt 9 = Quint, DW III, 67; Jundt 10 = Quint, DW II, 59; and Jundt 11 = Quint, DW I, 13.

²⁰ This is Jundt 12: *Mater tua et fratres tui foris sunt* (Lk. 8:20). This text, which is also edited in Eva Lüders, "Zur Überlieferung der St. Georgener Predigten, III," *Studia Neophilologica* 32 (1960), 123–87, see 162–64, no. 8 according to Ms. Lo1, displays parallels to the Melk version of Eckhart's *bürgelin* sermon (*Intravit Jesus in quoddam castellum*, Lk. 10:38 = Quint, DW I, 2). See Löser, *Meister Eckhart in Melk* (note 13 above), 550.

Jundt 1 (231–35): “Pater noster qui es in celis...” [“Our Father, who have given us life...”]: Str3, fol. 54v–61r. This is a catechetical exposition of the Lord’s Prayer of the type: *Cyprian says: Who has given us life*, probably originating in the High Alemannic region. It is transmitted almost exclusively in Eckhart manuscripts.²¹

Jundt 2 (236–40): “Ain guote closterler” [“A good monastic teaching”]: Str3, fol. 131r–137v. This is an anonymous discourse of a master addressed to nuns, giving them information about central questions of life in a religious community. The text was probably composed in the last quarter of the 14th century. In most of the manuscripts, it is attributed to Master Eckhart. Steer proposes that it originated in the circle around Tauler.²²

Jundt 3 (240–46): “Daz send gar hoch fragen und materien:” Str3, fol. 265v–275v. This is a dialogue between the disciple and the Master about the vision of God, divine revelation, the essence of the soul, the Creator and the creation, and about the Trinity. A brief introduction describes the dialogue as the translation “by a skillful cleric” of a text by Dionysius the Areopagite. This treatise is a translation of a passage from the *Clavis physicae* of Honorius Augustodunensis, who in turn made excerpts from the *Periphyseon* of John Eriugena. It is thus a reception of Eriugena “in the wake of Master Eckhart.”²³

Jundt 4 (246–52): “Schœn fragen:” Str3, fol. 318v–323v. Paul’s disciple Timothy asks his teacher questions about the sacrament of the altar; about the righteous, the corrupt, and the poor human being; about a holy life; and about the path to perfection. This text is transmitted not only in the Strasbourg manuscript anthology, but also in the Eckhart manuscripts B30 (containing mostly aphorisms from Pfeiffer and unidentified material), S1 (anthology of Jörg Gartner), and Sa, which contains sermons by Nicholas of Strasbourg and Eckhart as well as numerous aphorisms. Didactic dialogues between Paul and Timothy are sometimes also attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite; Jundt 3 seems to be one example of this.²⁴

Jundt 5 (252f.): “Etlich hoch fragen:” Str3, fol. 69r–71v. Like the previous two pieces, this text too contains questions. Here, they stand as a block at the beginning: questions about prayer, forgiveness, the sacrament, redemption,

²¹ See Bernd Adam, “Vaterunserauslegungen in der Volkssprache (anonyme),” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 10, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1999), cols. 170–82, see 176f.

²² See Georg Steer, “Eine gute Klosterlehre,” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 3, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1981), 330f.

²³ The text is a translation of Honorius Augustodunensis, *Clavis physicae* 11.23–25.50 with some abridgements and expansions; see Kurt Ruh, “Scotus, Johannes Eriugena,” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 8, ed. Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1992), 959–66, see 963f.

²⁴ See Volker Honemann, “Fragen des Timotheus an Paulus,” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 2, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1980), 798f. The questions are also found in Latin: see Honemann, “(Pseudo-)Dionysius Areopagita,” *ibid.*, 154–66, see 158.

and the inner life. These are followed by replies which answer only the first two and the last questions.²⁵ The reply contains a parable about fire and wood which is employed several times by Eckhart, formulated in almost exactly the same way.²⁶

Jundt 6 (253–55): “Ain guote kurtze ler:” Str 3, fol. 190v–192v. This is a didactic text on the theme of the discernment of spirits, introduced by Ps.-Eckhart, *Liber positionum*, n. 27:²⁷ “Osee der prophet ward gezogen in ain goetlich liecht...” [“Hosea the prophet was caught up into a divine light...”]. This light is interpreted as the Spirit of truth. A master²⁸ then lists nine spirits, eight of which are false; only one of them represents the Spirit of truth. The one who lives in Christ receives this Spirit, and in the Spirit of truth he can penetrate into the “hidden unity” with God.

Jundt 13 (270–74): “Maria stuond uf und gieng snelle in daz gebirge. Die maister der hailigen geschrift sprechend daz an dem usflusse der creature us dem ersten ursprungen sei ein cirkeliches widerboegen des endes uf den begin...” [“Mary arose and went quickly into the hill country. The masters of sacred scripture say that in the flowing out of the creature from the first origin there lies a circular return of the end to the beginning...”]; Str3, fol. 240v–246v. This is a mystical sermon (homily) on Lk. 1:39 from the circle around Eckhart. There are parallels to Suso. The text is partly identical to a mixed-language German–Latin sermon in the supplement in Jostes. In the manuscript Basel, University Library B XI 10, this sermon is attributed to Heinrich of Egwint.²⁹ The conclusion (Jundt, 274, 4–15) is identical with a passage in Eckhart’s Sermon 83, which is also found in a slightly variant form in Pfeiffer’s treatise XVIII.³⁰

Jundt 14 (274f.): “Es ist geschriben in dem ewangelio das Maria Jacob und Johannes muoter bat Cristum und saite: Sprich das, das die meine zwen sune ainer sitze zuo der rechten hand und einer zuo der lincken...” [“It is written in the Gospel that Mary the mother of James and John made a request of Christ and said: Say that one of my two sons may sit at the

²⁵ “Wann ist das unmiltost leben? wenn hat der gaist goetlich glichait?... wie sol ich mich halten und leben nach dem inren leben?” [“When is the hardest life? When does the spirit have equality with God?... How am I to behave and live in accordance with the inner life?”] (Jundt, 252).

²⁶ See Meister Eckhart, Pr. 11, DW I, 180, 8–13; and *Book of the divine consolation*, DW V, 33, 11–34, 4.

²⁷ Meister Eckhart, ed. Pfeiffer (note 9 above), 638, 23–40.

²⁸ In the text, the “discernment of spirits” is presented as the climax: “Der maister spricht von nün gaisten...” [“The master speaks of nine spirits...”] (Jundt, 254); “Die besten maister sprechent: Der den gaist der warhait well verstan...” [“The best masters say: Whoever wishes to understand the Spirit of truth...”] (Jundt, 255); “Unser aller besten maister sprechent: Der mensch der da lebt in dem gaiste der warhait...” [“Our best masters say: The human being who lives in the Spirit of truth...”] (Jundt, 255).

²⁹ See Spamer, “Zur Überlieferung” (note 6 above), 335.

³⁰ See Josef Quint, *Meister Eckhart. Die deutschen Werke* 3 (Stuttgart: 1976), 438 note 1. This is the passage DW III, Pr. 83, 437, 4–438, 1. Quint sees this as a borrowing from Eckhart’s sermon.

right hand and one at the left..."]: Str3, fol. 70v–71r. A brief exposition of Matt. 20:21.

Jundt 15 (275f.): “Das ist von fünf armueten. Cristus der spricht: Selig sind die armen des gaistes, das himelreich ist ir. Es sind fünf hande armuet...” [“This is about five forms of poverty. Christ says: Blessed are the poor in spirit, the kingdom of heaven is theirs. There are five kinds of poverty...”]: Str3, fol. 183v–184v. An exposition of the first Beatitude (Matt. 5:3) in terms of five forms of poverty. As a Pseudo-Eckhartian piece, this text belongs in the complex of Eckhart’s teaching about poverty.³¹

Jundt 16 (276–78): A collection of aphorisms of the teachers: Str3, fol. 323v–326v.

Jundt 17 (278f.): Instruction about the true spiritual life: Str3, fol. 186v–187v.

Jundt 18 (279f.): Christ’s words to Mary about the truth, before he took up his cross: Str3, fol. 193r–194r. A brief exposition of the truth.

Franz Jostes’ edition³² presents the contents of a 14th-century collection of sermons, a Nuremberg *predig puch* from the Dominican convent of Saint Catherine (N1).³³ We do not know who compiled this collection, nor the materials on which he worked, nor where he worked. The only certain fact is that the compiler aimed at producing a collection of sermons by Eckhart and brought together what he judged to derive from the pen of the great Dominican, or at least breathed the spirit of Eckhart. Jostes cites 82 pieces, and presents only those which were unprinted at that time. The only contemporary authority to be mentioned is Meister Eckhart. A total of 29 sermons are or will be included in the great Stuttgart Eckhart edition;³⁴ one is printed in Pfeiffer (Pfeiffer 103) and is still regarded today

³¹ See Freimut Löser, “Der niht enwil und niht enweiz und niht enhât. Drei übersehene Texte Meister Eckharts zur Armutslehre,” in *Contemplata aliis tradere*, ed. Claudia Brinken et al. (Berne: 1995), 391–439, see 396. The text partly accords with Jostes, no. 34, 29, 13–25; see Spamer, “Zur Überlieferung” (note 6 above), 349.

³² Franz Jostes, *Meister Eckhart und seine Jünger. Ungedruckte Texte zur Geschichte der deutschen Mystik* (Fribourg: 1895); reprinted with a Glossary by Peter Schmitt and an Afterword by Kurt Ruh (Berlin: 1972).

³³ Nuremberg, Stadtbibliothek, Cod. Cent. IV 40; on this manuscript, see Karin Schneider, *Die Handschriften der Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg 1: Die deutschen mittelalterlichen Handschriften* (Wiesbaden: 1965), 49–56; on the library of the convent of Saint Catherine, see Antje Willing, *Literatur und Ordensreform im 15. Jahrhundert. Deutsche Abendmahlschriften im Nürnberger Katharinenkloster* (Münster: 2004), 31–67; Marie-Luise Ehrenschwendtner, “A Library Collected by and for the Use of Nuns: St. Catherine’s Convent, Nuremberg,” in *Women and the Book: Assessing the Visual Evidence*, ed. Lesley Smith (Toronto: 1997), 123–32.

³⁴ Jostes 1 = DW I, 20a; Jostes 4 = Pf. 76.1 (its authenticity is demonstrated by Löser); Jostes 14 = DW III, 70; Jostes 15 = DW II, 54a; Jostes 16 and 17 = DW I, 19; Jostes 22 = DW II, 39; Jostes 23 = DW III, 77; Jostes 25 = DW II, 43; Jostes 28 = DW I, 23; Jostes 31 = DW I,

as "Pseudo-Eckhart." This leaves us with questionable material consisting of 18 sermons and sermon-like texts:

Jostes 8 (3f.): "Dan ist der mensch ein mensch . . ." N₁, fol. 13va–vb. A sermon resembling a treatise, *explicit*: "Disen sermo sprach meister Ekkart."

Jostes 9 (4–6): "Vidi civitatem sanctam Jherusalem (Apc 21:2):" N₁, fol. 14a–vb. Contains sentences from Eckhart DW II, Pr. 43. (Steer thinks that this text may be authentic.)

Jostes 10.1 (6, 32–7, 29): "Maister Ekkart sprach: Etlich meister di fragment, ob verstantnuzze edler sei oder minne . . ." ["Meister Eckhart said: Some masters ask whether knowledge or love is nobler . . ."]: N₁, 14vb–15rb. A fragment of a sermon. (Steer reviews the possibility of its authenticity.)

Jostes 10.2 (7, 30–8, 27): A series of mystical aphorisms: "Ich han etwenn gesprochen . . .," "Ditz spricht Meister Ekkart . . ." (contains sentences from DW I, Pr. 21); "Ditz spricht meister Ekkart . . ." (contains sentences from Par. an. 19 and 20); "Ditz spricht bruder Johannes . . .," "Ich sprich . . .," "Bischof Albrecht spricht . . ." N₁, fol. 15rb–vb.

Jostes 24 (18f.): "In dem anbegin waz daz wort, und daz wort waz bei got, and got waz daz wort:" N₁, fol. 29va–30ra. Contains a passage from a sermon by Nicholas of Landau; see Hans Zuchhold, *Des Nikolaus von Landau Sermone* (Halle: 1905), 26f.

Jostes 27 (20f.): "Circumfulsit Paulum lux:" N₁, fol. 31vb–32vb. An anonymous sermon.

Jostes 34 (28–30): a treatise-like composition consisting of: (1) N₁, fol. 40vb–41ra = Eckhart, Pr. 62; DW III, 66, 4–69, 2 (Jostes, 28, 29–29,10). (2) N₁, fol. 41ra–va = Pf. Treatise IV: *Von dem adel der sele* (Jostes, 29, 11; not printed). (3) N₁, fol. 41va–vb = Jundt 15: "Ez sint fimflei armut" (Jostes, 29, 1 3–30, 2). (4) N₁, fol. 41vb–42ra, unidentified (Jostes, 30, 2–24).

Jostes 40 (35–37): "Deus karitas est. Got ist di minne (1 Jn 4:8):" N₁, fol. 46rb–47ra. An anonymous sermon.

Jostes 41 (37–40): "Alle di behalten suln werden, di hat er vater seinem sun geben" ["All those who are to be saved, the Father has given to his Son"]: N₁, fol. 47ra–48ra. An anonymous sermon (Jostes, 37–29–39, 17) which was taken over by Nicholas of Landau in an abridged form; see Hans Zuchhold, *Des Nikolaus von Landau Sermone* (Halle: 1905), 38–40.

Jostes 57 (57f.): "Bischof Albrecht sprach: Von dem vater vloz ein liht und sturzet sich uf alle herzen . . ." ["Bishop Albrecht said: From the Father flowed forth a light and sprang into all hearts . . ."]: N₁, fol. 59va–60rb. This sermon, attributed to Albert the Great (Jostes, 57, 15–58, 19), is taken over by

9; Jostes 32 = DW II, 46; Jostes 33 = DW II, 40; Jostes 34 = (in part) DW III, 62; Jostes 35 = DW II, 37; Jostes 36 = DW IV, 106; Jostes 48 = DW II, 55; Jostes 52 = DW II, 31; Jostes 55 = DW III, 78; Jostes 60 = DW IV, 107; Jostes 61 = DW I, 18; Jostes 69.1 = DW IV, 115; Jostes 69.2 = DW II, 36b; Jostes 70 = DW II, 45; Jostes 73 = DW IV, 95a; Jostes 77 = DW II, 58; Jostes 78 = DW I, 21; Jostes 79 = DW I, 7; Jostes 82 = DW IV, 117.

Nicholas of Landau; see Hans Zuchhold, *Des Nikolaus von Landau Sermone* (Halle: 1905), 78f.

Jostes 62 (60f.): “Die meister fragen, ob der sun iht berhaftig sei... Daz wir hir zu kumen etc.” [“The masters ask whether the Son does not give birth... That we come to that point, etc.”]: N1, fol. 64rb–va. An anonymous, treatise-like text.

Jostes 64 (61–63): A composition consisting of: (1) “Unser frawe starte auf in den spiegel der gotheit” [“Our Lady looked upwards into the mirror of the Godhead”]: N1, fol. 65ra–va; an anonymous sermon (also included in the Postil of Hartwig of Erfurt). (2) “Unser herre sprach zu Marthen...” [“Our Lord said to Martha...”]: N1, fol. 54va–vb; an anonymous fragment of a sermon (also included in the Postil of Hartwig of Erfurt). (3) “Wer nu frei hertz haben will, der muz neun stuk an im han” [“One who wants to have a free heart must have nine pieces in himself...”]: N1, fol. 65v; an anonymous passage from a treatise.

Jostes 65 (63f.): “Sanctus Paulus der wart gezuket in den dritten himel...” [“Saint Paul was caught up into the third heaven...”]: N1, fol. 65vb–66va. An anonymous, treatise-like text.

Jostes 66 (64f.): A composition consisting of: (1) “Unser here spricht in dem ewangelio Johannis: Beleibet in mir...” [“Our Lord says in the Gospel of John: Abide in me...”]: N1, fol. 66va; an anonymous passage from a treatise. (2) “In siben dingen mak man merken, ob der mensch seinen geistlichen freunt in got minne...” [“There are seven things that show whether a person loves his spiritual friend in God...”]: N1, fol. 66vb; an anonymous text about seven signs of spiritual love (Jostes, 65, 10–20). (3) “Sunderlich lieb on huote die ist ein valsch minnerin...” [“Secret love without surveillance is a false lover...”]: N1, fol. 66vb–67ra; an anonymous text about false love (Jostes, 65, 21–35).

Jostes 68 (66f.): “Dreu dink sein zu merken, dar an ligt volkumenheit...” [“Three things must be noted; it is on them that perfection depends...”]: N1, fol. 70rb–71ra. An anonymous, treatise-like text (Jostes, 66, 8–24 = Hans Zuchhold, *Des Nikolaus von Landau Sermone* (Halle: 1905), 37).

Jostes 72 (70): “Vere dominus est in loco isto” (Gen. 28:16): N1, fol. 76va–77va. An anonymous sermon, printed in Sievers (see below, note 37), Nr. 26, ZfdA 15, 433–35 following Kassel, Murhardsche und Landesbibliothek, 4° Ms. Theol. 94 (K2).

Jostes 74 (76–78): “Sequere me etc. Unser herr sprach zu sant Peter: Volg mir noch...” [“Our Lord said to Saint Peter: Follow me”]: N1, fol. 79v–80va. An anonymous sermon, also included in the collection by Lienhart Peuger: Melk, Stiftsbibliothek Codd. 705, 235 (Steer gives consideration to the possibility of its authenticity).

Jostes 75 (78f.): “Ez spricht ein evangeliste: Wer ein lieht enpeht, der sol ez niht bestuertzen. Unser herre Jhesus Cristus sprach: Ich erbarm mich uber di schar. Bei der schar ist bezeichnet di sele...” [“An evangelist says: One who receives a light should not put it under a bushel. Our Lord Jesus Christ said: I have compassion on the crowd. The ‘crowd’ designates the

soul...”]: N₁, fol. 80v–81ra. A treatise-like text on the three forms of the silence of the soul.

Jostes 76 (79–81): “Optavi, et datus est mihi sensus (Wis 7:7). Die wort sint geschriben in dem buoch der weisheit und sprechen zu der teutsch also: Ich han gewuenschet und begeret, und mir ist gegeben der sin...” [“These words are written in the Book of Wisdom and have the following meaning in German: I wished and desired, and the meaning was given to me”]: N₁, fol. 81ra–82rb. An anonymous sermon about God as the Spirit of wisdom. It is transmitted in a total of ten manuscripts, as well as in Peuger’s collection: Melk, Stiftsbibliothek Codd. 705, 235. Löser takes into consideration the possibility of Eckhart’s authorship, since cross-references from DW II, Pr. 59 could refer to this text.³⁵

In addition, we have treatises, aphorisms,³⁶ texts in the form of *sententiae* and excerpts, as well as the Eckhart legend *Meister Eckhart’s symposium* (Jostes 38 = Pfeiffer, Spr. 70). The treatise *Of Two Kinds of Ways* has been included in Jostes 18 and 19 (N₁, fol. 24vb–26va; see below, note 66). The beginning is missing in the Nuremberg Sermon Book, and the second half is divided into two parts; Jostes 18 has a sermon-like beginning which has nothing to do with the treatise.

Jostes 18 (13–15): “Man liset an der heiligen geschrift von virdhanden chomen zu got...” [“One reads in sacred scripture about many possibilities of coming to God...”] (13, 32–14, 21; 14, 22–15, 16 (conclusion) = an excerpt from *Of Two Kinds of Ways*, ZfdA 8 (1851), 245, 9–246, 22).

Jostes 19 (15–17): “O altitudo diviciarum sapiencie. Die reichet gotes ist <daz er> niht en ist noch niht enhat allez, des man geworten mak...” [“The richness of God consists in the fact that he neither is nor possesses anything in himself that one can put into words...”] = an excerpt from *Of Two Kinds of Ways*, ZfdA 8 (1851), 246, 22–251, 2.

Jostes 21 (17) is a passage from a treatise that immediately follows the preceding Eckhart sermon DW III, 85. Its beginning displays agreements with Pf. Treatise X *Von armuot des geistes*, and it contains a sentence from Pf. Treatise XIV *Sant Johannes sprichet*: Pfeiffer 532, 28. This text has not been printed. N₁, fol. 27rb–28ra.

Jostes 49–51 (51–53; N₁, fol. 55rb–vb) are unknown anonymous texts. These are “Seven words of Christ to two disciples;” Christ’s definition “Of suffering;” and a mystical poem in five strophes about “nakedness.”

³⁵ See Löser, *Meister Eckhart in Melk* (note 13 above), 233.

³⁶ Treatises and aphorisms which are already printed in Pfeiffer are discussed under the corresponding rubric there. The Nuremberg Sermon Book includes the treatises Pf. IV, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV, and XVI, usually in excerpts and in a revised form; to these, we must add *Liber positionum*, n. 120, 138, 140–42, 148, 149–54, 155, 161, 162.

In 1872, Eduard Sievers published 26 sermons under the name of Meister Eckhart.³⁷ The first 20 texts come from the anthology *Paradisus animae intelligentis* and have been demonstrated today to be genuine sermons by Eckhart. For sermons 21–26, Sievers used the manuscript Kassel, Universitätsbibliothek, Landesbibliothek and Murhardsche Bibliothek, 4^o Ms. theol. 94 (K2). On fol. 293a–308b, he discovered ten sermons “without any superscription or mention of the author.”³⁸ His decision to ascribe the six unknown pieces to Meister Eckhart was based first on the fact that the other four were already known under his name in the secondary literature,³⁹ and secondly on notes by Rudolf Cruel, who had examined the manuscript.⁴⁰ One of the sermons (Sievers, Nr. 25) has since been included in the great Eckhart edition as Nr. 61; the other five (Sievers, Nr. 21–24 and 26) still await a closer investigation.⁴¹ It is striking that a 15th-century collector, the lay brother Lienhart Peuger in Melk, had already claimed Eckhart as the author of Sievers 22–24 and 26; all of these are included in Peuger’s Melk manuscript and were included in part in the treatise *Von der sêle werdikeit und eigenschaft*,⁴² which Löser has shown to be a compilation by Peuger. Of the seven texts printed by Sievers, therefore, we are left with five Pseudo-Eckhartian sermons:

Sievers 21 (418–22): “Beatus vir qui inventus est sine macula” (Sirach 31:8): a sermon about the nobility of the soul and the love of God.

Sievers 22 (422–25): “Domus mea domus orationis vocabitur etc.” (Matt. 21:13): a sermon about prayer.

³⁷ Eckhard Sievers, “Predigten von Meister Eckhart,” *Zeitschrift für deutsches Alterthum* 15 (1872), 373–439.

³⁸ On the manuscript, see Klimanek, *Verzeichnis* (note 11 above): the codex was completed by Philipp Bebenhausen, probably parish priest of Saint Peter’s Church in Fritzlar, on 20 June 1470. Its first part contains Latin sermon sketches, in the hand of Heinrich Eymbich; a second part contains German sermons without indications of authorship, in the hand of Philipp Bebenhausen. See also Sievers, “Predigten,” 438.

³⁹ These are Pfeiffer 45 = DW III, 60; Pfeiffer 75 and 108 = DW IV, 108; and Par. an. 1 = DW IV, 87.

⁴⁰ Rudolf Cruel, *Geschichte der deutschen Predigt im Mittelalter* (Detmold: 1879), on this manuscript see 529–32.

⁴¹ Today, thanks to transmission data which have recently become known, Löser can write that Sievers 22 is “most probably the work of Meister Eckhart.” see Löser, *Meister Eckhart in Melk* (note 13 above), 193f., and Löser, “Als ich mê gesprochen hân. Bekannte und bisher unbekannte Predigten Meister Eckharts im Lichte eines Handschriftenfundes,” *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 97 (1986), 206–27, see 216f. In the same passage, Löser takes into account the possibility that Eckhart is also the author of Sievers 23.

⁴² In Pfeiffer, *Meister Eckhart* (note 9 above), Treatise III.

Sievers 23 (425–27): “Justorum autem animae in manu dei sunt etc.” (Wis. 3:1): a sermon about the relationship of the soul to God. It includes the legend about Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite as a pagan astrologer who came to the true faith via natural faith.⁴³

Sievers 24 (427–30): “Daz hummelrîche ist glich eim konnige etc. der sîme sone ein wirtschaf machte” (Matt. 22:2): a sermon about the qualities of the soul which desire to come to the heavenly wedding feast (i.e. to eternal bliss).

Sievers 26 (433–35): “Vere dominus iste est in loco isto etc.” (Gen. 28:16). The text is found not only in Melk, but also in the *Nuremberg Sermon Book* of Saint Catherine’s convent.⁴⁴ It is a sermon about the soul (Jacob) and its fight against the body (Esau), and about the soul (ladder) as a “means” between heaven and earth.

Finally, in 1925, Philipp Strauch presented a Berlin manuscript anthology and printed its material, which was unknown at that time, in the Appendix to his article.⁴⁵ This is the 14th-century manuscript Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Mgo 4, Perg., 205 folios (B7). This anthology is written in one single hand. Strauch lists 51 texts of various genres, none of which mentions its author; 19 of these texts have been included today in the critical edition of the complete works of Meister Eckhart.⁴⁶ The rest of the contents consist of the treatise *Of Two Kinds of Ways* (see above on N1, Str3), collections of quotations, aphorisms in dialogue form, and parts of the *Liber positionum*. We also find a symbolic exposition of the five wounds of Christ; a mosaic of excerpts from Suso’s *Book of Eternal Wisdom*; a sermon which is also found in the Leipzig printed edition of Tauler (nr. 79); the treatise *Diu zeichen eines warhaften Grundes*, edited by Pfeiffer as Treatise VII; counsels about how to become perfect; the ten commandments; the 12 evangelical counsels; and Pseudo-Eckhartian texts which were already known from other anthologies.⁴⁷ We also find ten texts which Strauch presents in his Appendix:

⁴³ See Albert the Great, *Super Dionysii epistulas* 7 (Letter to Polycarp), in *Alberti magni Super Dionysii Mysticam Theologiam et Epistulas*, ed. Paul Simon, Editio Coloniensis 37, 2 (Münster: 1978), 501–13.

⁴⁴ This text is Jostes 72; see Jostes, *Meister Eckhart und seine Jünger* (note 32 above), 72 (the text is not printed by Jostes, who refers to Sievers).

⁴⁵ See Philipp Strauch, “Zur Überlieferung Meister Eckharts, I,” *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 49 (1925), 355–402.

⁴⁶ See Klimanek, *Verzeichnis* (note 11 above), on Ms. B7.

⁴⁷ These are Jostes 57, 62; Pfeiffer, no. 50 and 78, the authenticity of which is under serious consideration; Sievers 26.

Strauch, Appendix I (370–72): “Serve bone et fidelis intra in gaudium domini tui” (Matt. 25:11): B7, fol. 27–34v.

Strauch, Appendix 2 (373–75): “Unser herre erzeuget uber alle sin wercke nyt glich, sunder er gibbet darnach daz eyne iglicher entpfahen magk...” [“Our Lord does not display his works equally to all, but he gives according to what each one is able to receive...”] B7, fol. 34v–39v.

Strauch, Appendix 3 (375–77): “Diß wordt sprach unsere herre Jhesus, das die weinenden selig sint” [“Our Lord Jesus spoke this word, that those who weep are blessed”] (Lk. 6:21): B7, fol. 39v–46r.

Strauch, Appendix 4 (377–79): “Dieß wordt spricht unser lieber herre Jhesus Christus, das nyemant den vatter bekenne dan der sone unde den er yn kundigen wille” [“Our dear Lord Jesus Christ said this word, that no one knows the Father except the Son, and the one to whom he wishes to reveal him”] (Matt. 11:27): B7, fol. 46r–50v.

Strauch, Appendix 5 (379–82): “Scitis quid fecerim vobis etc.” (Jn 13:12): B7, fol. 59r–66v.

Strauch, Appendix 6 (382–83): “Sanctus Johannes sprichet, daz dri gezeuge sint in dem hymmel, die den hymmel erluchtent: der vatter und das wordt und der geyste” [“Saint John says that there are three witnesses in heaven, who light up the heaven: the Father and the Word and the Spirit”] (1 Jn 5:7): B7, fol. 186v–189r.

Strauch, Appendix 7 (383–86): “Isaias sprichet: usser der wurtzele von Jesse entsprang eyne rude...” [“Isaiah says: out of the root of Jesse came forth a shoot”] (Isa. 11:1–2): B7, fol. 190v–196v. Pancke cautiously claimed Eckhart’s authorship for this sermon, which is transmitted in numerous other manuscript anthologies. One argument in favor of this might be the fact that Peuger included excerpts from this text in the treatise *Von der sêle werdikeit und eigenschaft*.⁴⁸

Strauch, Appendix 8: “Der wise sprichet in dem buch der wißheyt: Ich han gewünschet und begeret, myr ist der synne gegeben und ich han gekoren...” [“The wise man says in the Book of Wisdom: I wished and desired, the meaning was given to me, and I have chosen...”] (Wis. 7:7–8): B7, fol. 199r–204r. The text of the Berlin manuscript merely presents another redaction of Jostes nr. 76.

Strauch, Appendix 9 (388–90): “Emitte spiritum tuum” (Ps 103:30): B7, fol. 230r–235r.

Strauch, Appendix 10 (390–401): “Sanctus Paulus sprichet: eyne dierlich mensche enmagk nit begriffen dinge des gotlichen geystes...” [“Saint Paul says: an ‘animal’ human being cannot understand the things of the divine spirit...”] (1 Cor. 2:14): B7m fol. 268r–293r. This is a German reworking of the first two treatises of Augustine’s *In Joannis Evangelium Tractatus CXXIV*

⁴⁸ See Löser, *Meister Eckhart in Melk* (note 13 above), 459 note 23; and Max Pahncke, *Kleine Beiträge zur Eckhartphilologie* (Neuhaldensleben: 1909), 3f.

on Jn 1:1–14.⁴⁹ According to Kurt Ruh, it is possible that the unknown author belongs to the circles around Meister Eckhart.⁵⁰

There are many manuscript anthologies which are devoted primarily to Eckhart and to texts from the circles around him. Where it is a question of *dubia*, however, most of their texts are not accessible in print. Let us briefly present here one important new discovery of recent research into Eckhart:

London, Victoria and Albert Museum, Cod. L 1810–1955 (Lo4), paper, 244 folios, second half of the 15th century. This codex contains on fol. 124ra–171ra a collection of 27 anonymous sermons, which the copyist calls a “book.” Most of these (19) are sermons by Eckhart and Pseudo-Eckhart that have already been edited from other manuscripts. We are left with eight unidentified sermons in the immediate context of the Eckhart tradition. Only one of these is transmitted uniquely in Lo4; none of these texts is accessible in print.⁵¹

Let us also recall the collection of mystical-ascetical texts from the convent of Saint Catherine in Nuremberg, which has long been known: Nuremberg, Stadtbibliothek, Cod. Cent. VI, 46h, written in 1461 (N2). It contains sermons, treatises, and aphorisms, and includes on fol. 78r–83v an anonymous sermon about the essence of grace: *On the seeing of God by the active reason*. Earlier scholarship claimed this text, which is transmitted only in this Nuremberg manuscript, for Eckhart, and Freimut Löser presents arguments which suggest that it be read anew in the light of this question.⁵²

In the case of almost all the sermon anthologies, we do not know who compiled them, what his intention was, or whether he himself associated the texts with Eckhart. The great exception is the Melk Eckhart manuscripts, which Lienhart Peuger compiled between 1414 and 1455 for the

⁴⁹ See Strauch, “Zur Überlieferung” (note 45 above), 368f.

⁵⁰ See Kurt Ruh, “Johannes-Evangelium 1, 1–14. Deutsche Auslegung nach Augustin,” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 4, ed. Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1983), 832f. Ruh draws attention here to the context of transmission, to the *Expositio s. Evangelii sec. Iohannem* by Meister Eckhart, and to the Pseudo-Eckhartian treatise *Diu glöse über daz êwangelium S. Johannis* (Pfeiffer, Tr. XVIII).

⁵¹ On the London manuscript, see Löser, “Als ich mê gesprochen hân” (note 41 above), and Steer, “Die Schriften Meister Eckharts” (note 1 above), 250f.

⁵² See Freimut Löser, “Vom Schauen Gottes durch die wirkende Vernunft,” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 11, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin: 2004), 1375.

library of the lay brothers in Melk. Freimut Löser has made an exemplary study of the figure of Peuger as collector, editor, and compiler.⁵³

In the two-volume sermon collection Melk, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 1865 and 705, blocks of sermons by Eckhart alternate with blocks of sermons by Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl or other authors of the Vienna School. Peuger took over the ascriptions to Meister Eckhart from his source, a copious Middle German collection of Eckhart sermons which is no longer accessible.⁵⁴ This is why unknown texts that Peuger ascribes to Eckhart deserve particular attention.⁵⁵ However, Lienhart Peuger was active not only as writer and editor, but also as compiler. In this capacity, he wrote a spiritual open letter ("Maister Ekchart der schuel von paris spricht in seiner ler..." ["Meister Eckhart of the University of Paris says in his teaching..."])⁵⁶ in which he arranged teachings of Eckhart from the perspective of their concrete application to monastic life, as well as a collection of aphorisms⁵⁷ with numerous *dicta* from Eckhartian and Pseudo-Eckhartian texts. Drawing on his Eckhart materials under the heading of the "soul," he compiled the Pseudo-Eckhartian treatise which Pfeiffer published under the title *Von der sêle werdikeit und eigenschaft*.⁵⁸

In addition to the treatise *Von der sêle werdikeit und eigenschaft*, Pfeiffer collected in his edition 17 other treatises under the name of Eckhart. Up to now, three of these have been included in the great Stuttgart collected edition,⁵⁹ but today, the authenticity of the treatise *Von abegescheidenheit* (DW V, Tr. III = Pfeiffer, Tr. IX) is once again a matter of dispute.⁶⁰ The most important argument against Eckhartian authorship is a quotation from the "Master" which can be identified as a quotation from Eckhart. This would mean that this treatise, which presents Eckhart's teaching

⁵³ See Löser, *Meister Eckhart in Melk* (note 13 above).

⁵⁴ See *ibid.*, 265–72. Löser lists the sermons of dubious authenticity: 259–61.

⁵⁵ See all the Melk texts which Peuger associates with Eckhart: *ibid.*, 261–63.

⁵⁶ See *ibid.*, 303–09.

⁵⁷ Melk, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 235, fol. 330ra–336rb; see *ibid.*, 87–92 and *passim*. The collection of aphorisms is printed on 512–36, with identification of the excerpts used.

⁵⁸ Pfeiffer, *Meister Eckhart* (note 9 above), Traktat III, 394–416. New edition with comments on the sources: Löser, *Meister Eckhart in Melk*, 327–497.

⁵⁹ (1) *Liber "Benedictus,"* ed. Josef Quint, *Meister Eckhart, Die Deutschen Werke V: Meister Eckharts Traktate* 1 (Stuttgart: 1963), 1–61; this treatise is also known under the secondary title *Daz buoch der götlichen tröstunge*, see Pfeiffer, *Meister Eckhart* (note 9 above), Traktat V, 419–48. (2) *Die rede der underscheidunge*, ed. Josef Quint, DW V: *Meister Eckharts Traktate*, 2 (Stuttgart: 1963), 137–309; see Pfeiffer, *Meister Eckhart*, Traktat XVII, 543–78. (3) *Von abegescheidenheit*, ed. Josef Quint, DW V: *Meister Eckharts Traktate*, 3 (Stuttgart: 1963), 377–434; see Pfeiffer, *Meister Eckhart*, Traktat IX, 483–93.

⁶⁰ See Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik* 3 (note 3 above), 349–51.

about *Abgeschiedenheit* in an exaggerated form, would belong once more to the group of anonymous Pseudo-Eckhartian texts. The following texts are likewise under discussion:

Pfeiffer, Tr. I: *Von den XII nutzen unsers herren lîchames* (373–82). The single 14th-century manuscript witness to the transmission of this treatise⁶¹ attributes it to Meister Eckhart. It is a compilation of mystical-ascetic texts by various authors, concluding with an excerpt from the *Book of spiritual poverty*.⁶² It lists the 12 effects of receiving the Eucharist, which leads ultimately to the perfect mystical life of grace in the *einunge mit gote* [“union with God”] (382, 12). The unknown author is influenced both by the *De eucharistia* of Albert the Great and by the German terminology of Meister Eckhart.⁶³

Pfeiffer, Tr. II: *Der înslac (Von der edelkeit der sêle)* (382–94). This treatise was edited by Pfeiffer under the title *Von der edelkeit der sêle*, which he himself had chosen. The concluding sentence in other textual witnesses that Pfeiffer did not know call it *Der înslac* (“The impression”).⁶⁴ Lienhart Peuger associates with the excerpts which he makes from this text with Eckhart.⁶⁵ There are stylistic and terminological agreements with the treatise *Of Two Kinds of Ways*, which is attributed both to Eckhart and to Franke of Cologne (see below).⁶⁶

⁶¹ Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 2739, fol. 184rb–194rb. The printed version in the Cologne Tauler edition of 1543 presents it as ch. 39, the concluding section, of the Pseudo-Tauler collection *Des erleuchteten D. Johannes Tauleri göttliche Lehren*; see Peter Schmitt, “Von den zwölf nutzen unsers herren lîchames,” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 10, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1999), 1638–40.

⁶² See Spämer, “Zur Überlieferung” (note 6 above), 38of., and Steer, “Echtheit und Authentizität” (note 8 above), 42.

⁶³ See Schmitt, “Von den zwölf nutzen,” 1639; there are echoes of Meister Eckhart, DW II, Pr. 20a; DW IV, Pr. 108; and Ps.-Eckhart, Pfeiffer, Pr. 70.

⁶⁴ The treatise is transmitted *in extenso* in the manuscripts Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 2728 (on which Pfeiffer’s edition is based); Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Mq 1486; Augsburg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. III 1 4° 41; in addition, we have Nuremberg, Stadtbibliothek, Cod. Cent. VI 46h (Gottschall). There is also a widely scattered transmission. The final sentence is found in Berlin, Augsburg, Nuremberg, and the Munich fragment: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, clm 28917 (Hardenbergsche Sammlung): “ditz haizzet der inslack” (Zacher, 372). See Peter Schmitt, “Der înslac,” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 4, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1983), 406–08, see 406; Julius Zacher, “Bruchstücke aus der Sammlung des Freiherrn von Hardenberg III,” *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 14 (1882), 63–96, see 71f.; Spamer, “Zur Überlieferung” (note 6 above), 371f.

⁶⁵ Excerpts from the *înslac* are transmitted in Melk, Stiftsbibliothek, Codd. 856, 793 (3 excerpts), 1569 and 1865; see Löser, *Meister Eckhart in Melk* (note 13 above), 261 and passim; and Spamer, “Zur Überlieferung” (note 6 above), 371.

⁶⁶ Editions of the treatise: Franz Pfeiffer, “Predigten und Sprüche deutscher Mystiker I,” *Zeitschrift für deutsches Alterthum* 8 (1851), 209–58, see no. VIII, 243–51; and Wilhelm Preger, “Kritische Studien zu Meister Eckhart,” *Zeitschrift für historische Theologie* 34 (1864), 166–81, and *ibid.*, 36 (1866), 488 (Introduction: “Sanctus Paulus spricht”).

The first part of the treatise speaks of the powers of the soul and the second part speaks of the uniting of the soul to God. Since the structure of the powers of the soul is parallel to the Trinity, the second part discusses Trinitarian questions in particular. The concluding third part takes up once more the theme of uniting, which presupposes the “freedom of the spirit.”⁶⁷

Pfeiffer, Tr. IV: *Von dem adel der sêle* (416–18). This treatise, which deals with a core theme of Eckhartian preaching, is nowhere ascribed to Meister Eckhart.⁶⁸ It consists of two parts. The principal part, entitled: “Die meister sprechent von dem hœhsten adel der sêle unde frâgent...” [“The masters speak about the highest nobility of the soul and ask...”] (416, 6f.), discusses the abilities of the spirit, as the highest function of the soul, to know God. The reader sees at once that the author uses Meister Eckhart’s sermon about poverty (DW II, 52). The second part, cast in the form of a dialogue (“Ein mensche wart gefrâget...” [“Someone was asked...”]; 417, 38), discusses Eckhart’s concept of the poverty of the spirit, which goes as far as the total surrender of one’s will. The treatise closes with a direct reference to Eckhart’s celebrated definition of poverty.⁶⁹ It belongs to the extremely lively reception of Eckhart’s teaching about poverty, which consisted not only in the critical use of Sermon 52 (especially in the Low Countries), but also led scholars to new texts.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ See Schmitt, “‘Der înslac,’” 407.

⁶⁸ See Spamer, “Zur Überlieferung” (note 6 above), 374.

⁶⁹ “Das ist diu allernêhste armuot des geistes, wan ez ist nieman rehte arm, wan der niht enwil unde niht enweiz unde niht enhât, weder ûzwendic noch inwendic” [“This is the uttermost poverty of the spirit, for no one is truly poor except for the one who wants nothing and knows nothing and has nothing, whether externally or internally”] (418, 32–35), corresponding to Meister Eckhart, Pr. 52: “Ich hân hie vor gesprochen, daz daz sî ein arm mensche, der niht enwil ervûllen den willen gotes... Von dirre armuot sprechen wi, daz es sî diu hœhste armuot.—Ze dem andern mâle hân wir gesprochen, daz daz sî ein arm mensche, der niht enweiz in im diu werk gotes... daz ist diu klârste armuot.—Aber daz dritte, daz ist diu nêhste armuot... daz ist, daz der mensche niht enhât” [“I have already said that this is a poor person: one who does not even want to fulfill the will of God... It is of this poverty that we say it is the highest poverty.—Secondly, we have said that this is a poor person, one who knows nothing of the works of God in his own self... this is the purest poverty.—But the third, that is the uttermost poverty... that is, that the person has nothing”] (DW II, 499, 1–8). On Pfeiffer Tr. IV, see Kurt Ruh, “Von dem adel der sêle,” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 11, ed. Ruh et al. (Berlin: 2004), 16–18. Ruh points out that the second part of this treatise is also transmitted independently, in connection with Eckhart’s sermon on poverty.

⁷⁰ Jan van Ruusbroec and Jan van Leeuwen quote from Pr. 52 in their statements against the “heretic” Eckhart; on this, see Kurt Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik* 4: *Die niederländische Mystik des 14. bis 16. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: 1999), 40f. and passim. On Eckhart’s doctrine of poverty, see Löser, “Der niht enwil und niht enhât” (note 31 above). Löser does not discuss this treatise, but he refers to the so-called Salzburg Poverty Text and two sermons: one from the London sermon collection Lo4 (*Alle dy schar*, sermon on Lk. 6:19) and one from the Melk Eckhart manuscript Cod. 705 (sermon on Jn 14:6, *Ego sum via*). While the first two of these texts are recognized as authentic works by Eckhart, the question of the authenticity of the third text remains undecided.

Pfeiffer, Tr. VI: *Sister Katrei* (448–75). This dialogue treatise will be discussed below under “Eckhart legends.” Because of the material available to him, Pfeiffer printed it only in the short version.

Pfeiffer, Tr. VII: *Diu zeichen eines wârhaften grundes* (475–78). This text is identical to the first chapter of the *Meisterbuch* (*Of the 24 parts of a perfect life*), which is attributed to Rulman Merswin. This chapter had a wide independent transmission independently of the *Meisterbuch*, from the Upper German to the Dutch linguistic areas. Its subject is the knowledge of God: those who truly behold God can be recognized by means of 24 signs.⁷¹ In terms of its contents, this text can be included in the broadest sense under the category of the “discernment of spirits,” a very popular theme in the late Middle Ages; Eckhart nowhere discusses this theme.

Pfeiffer, Tr. VIII: *Von der geburt des ewigen wortes in der sêle* (478–83). In the same way as in Treatise VII, nine questions analyze whether or not the birth of the eternal Word has taken place in a soul. These nine questions about the birth of God in the soul found their way through scattered transmission into the Advent sermons of Hertwig of Erfurt. Questions eight and nine are also found in the *Heiligenleben* of Hermann of Fritzlar. The complete treatise is transmitted anonymously in one textual witness; there is also a scattered transmission.⁷²

Pfeiffer, Tr. X: *Von armuot des geistes* (493–95). This anonymous text, a loose assemblage of quotations from the Bible and the church fathers as well as individual *sententiae*, closes with a definition of four forms of spiritual poverty. The opening quotation *Beati pauperes spiritu etc.* leads into a list of requirements for correct conduct, the first of which is also found in Eckhart’s treatise *Von abegescheidenheit*.⁷³

Pfeiffer, Tr. XI, 1–3: *Von der übervart der gotheit* (495–516). Pfeiffer, Tr. XIII: *Von dem anepluzze* [“origin”] *des vaters* (521–27). Pfeiffer, Tr. XVI: *Von dem zorne der sêle* (542–43). These three or five (Nr. XI.1, 2 and 3) treatises are widely transmitted in connection with one another; they constitute a highly complex textual web which is grouped in various ways and in various sequences in the individual textual witnesses, where the genre of the text varies between treatise, sermon, and a loose collection of quotations. Pfeiffer’s presentation, based on the Einsiedeln manuscript Stiftsbibliothek Cod. 277 (E1), is completely arbitrary and does not even respect the

⁷¹ See Peter Schmitt, “‘Diu zeichen eines wârhaften grundes,’” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 10, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1999), 1522–25.

⁷² See Peter Schmitt, “‘Von der geburt des ewigen wortes in der sêle,’” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 2, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1980), 1134; and Spamer, “Zur Überlieferung” (note 6 above), 381.

⁷³ See Kurt Ruh, “‘Von armuot des geistes,’” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 11, ed. Ruh et al. (Berlin: 2004), 133f.; the agreement with *Von abegescheidenheit* DW V, 428, 10f. corresponds to Pfeiffer 493, 14f. See also Spamer, “Zur Überlieferung” (note 6 above), 384f., and Löser, “Der niht enwil und niht enweiz und niht enhât” (note 31 above).

sequence found in that manuscript.⁷⁴ The total complex is the object of a critical new edition with a commentary on the contents.⁷⁵ The disparate state of the edition and the purely associative thematic sequence make it virtually impossible to discern an argumentative structure in the contents. All three texts move on a high speculative level in the terminological tradition of German-language mysticism. Treatise XI discusses the powers of the soul (especially *verstentnisse* and *wille*) and their functions in the knowledge of God; the theme of the Trinity; and the uniting of the soul to God.⁷⁶ Treatise XIII, a composite treatise which has textual passages in common with the Pseudo-Eckhartian treatise *On the working of the soul* (see below), likewise discusses *verstentnisse* and *wille*, the powers of the soul; here, the interest is in the knowledge of God and in the Trinity, but also in the essence of the Godhead, which (in the tradition of negative theology) is paraphrased in images, some of which are unusual.⁷⁷ Treatise XVI is a section from a treatise on the powers of the soul: it deals with the *vis irascibilis* and its function in the knowledge of God.⁷⁸ All these texts are transmitted anonymously; and none of the unknown authors conceals Meister Eckhart.⁷⁹ Indeed, they work on the basis of a good knowledge of his works.

Pfeiffer, Tr. XII: *Von dem überschalle* ("jubilus") (516–20). This text consists of a mystical poem and its interpretation: "Diz ist diu glöse über den überschal." The poem treats of the traditional themes of the vernacular mysticism: the unity of the divine essence in the Trinity of the persons and the uniting of the soul to God. There is a noticeable terminological similarity to Suso. The poem is intellectually modest and clumsy from a formal perspective; it fits into the well-attested genre of mystical verses by nuns. The interpretation moves on a more demanding level. Its author draws on Chapter 52 of Suso's *Vita* for his commentary. Treatise XII is transmitted

⁷⁴ On Einsiedeln Ms. 277, see recently Helen Webster, *German Mysticism in Fourteenth-Century Basel: Gender and Genre in Einsiedeln Stiftsbibliothek MS 277* (Dissertation, Oxford: 2005).

⁷⁵ This is planned by Andreas Speer and Lydia Wegener, "Diz spricht ein höher meister"—*Kritische Edition und Kommentierung der drei pseudo-eckhartischen Traktaten aus dem Kontext der deutschen Mystik* ("Von der überbart der gotheit," "Von dem anefluzze des vaters," "Von dem zorne der sêle"). I am grateful to Lydia Wegener for information about this research project.

⁷⁶ See Peter Schmitt, "Von der überbart der gotheit," in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 9, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1995), 1205–1209. Passages from *Von abegescheidenheit* are found in Treatise XI; see Quint, DW V, 382f.

⁷⁷ See Kurt Ruh, "Von dem anefluzze des vaters," in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 11, ed. Ruh et al. (Berlin: 2004), 92–95.

⁷⁸ See Peter Schmitt, "Von dem zorne der sêle," in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 10, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1999), 1589f.

⁷⁹ According to the marginal notes of the manuscript collector Daniel Sudermann in the manuscript Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Cod. 4^o 191, parts of Treatise XI could go back to a sermon by Meister Eckhart; see Spamer, "Zur Überlieferung" (note 6 above), 385–91, see 391.

anonymously. Features of its content and style indicate that it comes from the circles around Henry Suso.⁸⁰

Pfeiffer, Tr. XIV: *Sant Johannes spricht "ich sach daz wort in gote..."* (527–33) and Pfeiffer, Tr. XV: *Die drie persône geschuofen die créature von nihte...* (533–42). These two untitled, anonymous composite treatises "from the school of Eckhart" are transmitted together; the transmission of the texts both in their totality and in newly combined individual parts is as complex as in the case of the treatise group XI, XIII, and XVI. The core can be identified as two sermons (on Rev. 14:13 in Tr. XIV, and on 1 Jn 4:16 in Tr. XV). These two sermons are the work of one and the same author; a redactor drew on other materials to elaborate them in treatise form. The most frequently quoted author is Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. There are also many echoes of Meister Eckhart, most clearly of his sermon on poverty.⁸¹ In its contents, this textual conglomerate concentrates on the usual themes: Trinitarian discussions, the essence of the soul and its uniting to God, and, on the basis of the divine processions, the three "creations."⁸²

Pfeiffer, Tr. XVIII: *Diu glôse über daz êwangelium S. Johannis* (578–93). This anonymously transmitted treatise comments on Jn 1:1–14. With its starting point in this text, it speaks of the birth of God in the soul and of the soul's collaboration in the work of God in the uniting with God. There is no reason

⁸⁰ See Peter Schmitt, "Von dem überschalle," in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 9, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1995), 1201–03; Spamer, "Zur Überlieferung" (note 6 above), 391–93; and Kurt Ruh, "Seuse, Vita 52 und das Gedicht und die Glosse 'Vom Überschall,'" in *Heinrich Seuse. Studien zum 600. Todestag 1366–1966*, ed. Ephrem Filthaut OP (Cologne: 1966), 191–212.

⁸¹ There are parallels to Meister Eckhart's sermons 15 and 46. There is a parallel to Sermon 90: supernatural light (Gottschall). Only two statements are taken over from the sermon on poverty (Pr. 52), and are repeated several times: the basic formulation that the poor person is the one "der niht enwil und niht enweiz und niht enhât" ["who wants nothing and knows nothing and has nothing"] and "daz der mensch alsô lebe, daz er alsô ledic sî beidiu sines eigenen willen und des willen gotes, als er was, dô er niht enwas" ["that the human being ought so to live that he is just as free of his own will and of the will of God as if he did not exist"] (cf. DW II, 499, 1–8); see Kurt Ruh and Peter Schmitt, "Sant Johannes spricht 'ich sach daz wort in gote'" und "'Die drie persône geschuofen die créature von nihte,'" in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 8, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1992), 577–82, see 579–81. There also occurs a sentence from *Von abegescheidenheit*, which is introduced there as a quotation from the Master: DW V, 428, 10–11 = Pfeiffer 533, 20–22; see Quint (ed.), *Meister Eckhart, Die deutschen Werke* V, 456f. On the reception of the sermon on poverty, see also Pfeiffer, Tr. IV and his notes.

⁸² See Kurt Ruh and Peter Schmitt, *ibid.*, and Spamer, "Zur Überlieferung" (note 6 above), 393–95. The two treatises have been critically edited with a commentary in the Master's dissertation presented at the University of Eichstätt in 1998 by Heidemarie Vogel, Pfeiffer, *Traktat 14/15: "Sant Johannes spricht: ich sach daz wort in got" und "Di drie persône geschuofen die créature von nihte."*

to attribute this text to Meister Eckhart.⁸³ Pp. 585, 34–586, 5 correspond in a slightly altered form to Meister Eckhart, Pr. 83 (DW III, 437, 4–438, 1).⁸⁴

One common feature of this anonymous spiritual treatise literature of the 14th century is the “instability” of the texts. Very little research has been done in this field, but to the extent that it is possible to evaluate the material, it consists almost in principle of composite and mosaic treatises⁸⁵ which draw on an extensive repertoire that is largely unknown and which can be reshaped at will on the basis of this repertoire by authors who are never mentioned by name and who switch from treatise to sermon, to spiritual open letter, or to collections of *sententiae* and excerpts. In addition to the texts printed by Pfeiffer, we may mention the following selected texts:

The best known of the mosaic treatises that are assembled from fragments and excerpts are the so-called *Doctrinal system of German mysticism* (the older title was: “Greith’s mosaic treatise”)⁸⁶ and *Spamer’s mosaic treatises*.⁸⁷

⁸³ See Peter Schmitt, “‘Diu glöse über daz êwangelium S. Johannis,’” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 3, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1981), 61. Pfeiffer included the text in his edition of Eckhart because of an error in his reading of it: “spriche ich meister eckehart” (579, 6) ought to read: “spricht maister Egkart.” See also Spamer, “Zur Überlieferung” (note 6 above), 397f., and the notes to Strauch, Appendix 10.

⁸⁴ See Josef Quint (as in note 3 above). The same excerpt from Eckhart is also found in Jundt 13.

⁸⁵ Pfeiffer’s edition, which presents the texts arbitrarily in accordance with individual manuscripts and has no comments on the sources, gives the impression that these are self-contained, authoritative works. On the textual genre of the composite and mosaic treatise, see Kurt Ruh, “‘Die Blume der Schauung,’” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 11, ed. Ruh et al. (Berlin: 2004), 264–66, see 265.

⁸⁶ See Volker Honemann, “Lehrsystem der deutschen Mystik,” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 5, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1985), 676–78. The treatise takes over extensive material from Eckhart and Tauler, and a lesser quantity from Suso, John of Sterngassen, Hane the Carmelite, Johannes Franke of Cologne, the *Book of spiritual poverty*, and other anonymous texts. It is obviously an attempt to present the doctrine of Eckhart and his circle, in its fundamental speculative elements, to a readership interested in spiritual matters.

⁸⁷ See Hans-Jochen Schiewer, “‘Spamers Mosaiktraktate,’” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 9, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1995), 29–31. In a manner very similar to the *Doctrinal system*, the treatises transmitted in the “sister manuscripts” Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, St Peter perg. 85 and 102 collect materials from Eckhart and his circle and from anonymous spiritual texts. Thematically, their primary interest is in the powers of the soul, Trinitarian questions, and the uniting of the soul to God. For identification of the material, see Adolf Spamer’s dissertation, *Über die Zersetzung und Vererbung in den deutschen Mystikertexten* (Giessen: 1910). See recently Burkhard Hasebrink, “Zersetzung? Eine Neubewertung der Eckhartkompilation in Spamers Mosaiktraktaten,” in *Contemplata aliis tradere. Studien zum Verhältnis von Literatur und Spiritualität*,

The *Mirror of the soul*⁸⁸ and the *Little Book of the Contemplative and the Active Life*⁸⁹ belong to this type. These all include both authentic and Pseudo-Eckhartian texts. The “inner core” of the *Little book* is the treatise *Of the Working of the Soul*,⁹⁰ which in turn can be dissected into excerpts from Pseudo-Eckhartian and authentic Eckhartian texts.⁹¹ According to Kurt Ruh, *Of the Working of the Soul* is one source of Pfeiffer’s Treatise XIII, *Von dem anefluzze des vaters*.⁹² As so often, the theme is the function of the powers of the soul and the uniting of the soul to God.

The treatise *Of Two Kinds of Ways* (alluding to the scriptural text *Ego sum via, veritas et vita*, Jn 14:6), which has already been mentioned several times, belongs to the circle of Meister Eckhart. It had a wide and usually anonymous transmission; it is ascribed once to Franke of Cologne,⁹³ and occasionally to Meister Eckhart. It is found *in extenso* or in excerpts in some of the great manuscript anthologies that contain Eckhartian texts (see above),⁹⁴ and most of it was included in the first of the so-called Gaesdonck Treatises.⁹⁵ Terminological and stylistic features link it to the

ed. Claudia Brinker et al. (Berlin: 1995), 353–69. An edition by Regina D. Schiewer is in preparation.

⁸⁸ See Kurt Ruh, “‘Spiegel der Seele,’” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 9, ed. Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1995), 124f. Edition and identification of the sources: Heidemarie Vogl, *Der “Spiegel der Seele.” Eine spätmittelalterliche mystisch-theologische Kompilation* (Stuttgart: 2007).

⁸⁹ See Kurt Ruh, “‘Büchlein vom schauenden und wirkenden Leben,’” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 1, ed. Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1999), 1251f.

⁹⁰ See Niklaus Largier, “‘Von der Wirkung der Seele,’” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 10, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1999), 1251f.

⁹¹ See the edition in Adolf Spamer, *Texte aus der deutschen Mystik des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts* (Jena: 1912), 100–07, with identification of sources. Excerpts from authentic sermons by Eckhart are taken from Pr. 4, 36b, and 54a, as well as from Pfeiffer Pr. 17 (the authenticity of which is under consideration).

⁹² Kurt Ruh, “‘Von dem anefluzze des vaters’” (note 77 above), 93: “In the case of ‘debris manuscripts,’ it is impossible in principle to determine who has done the borrowing. Nevertheless, it is most likely that Treatise XIII owes its textual fragments of text to the Basel treatise ‘On the working of the soul.’” [English translation by Bernard McGinn].

⁹³ Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, Ms. B XI. 10.

⁹⁴ *Of Two Kinds of Ways* is found in the Eckhart manuscripts: Strasbourg, Bibliothèque Nationale et Universitaire, Ms. 2795 (Str3); Nuremberg, Stadtbibliothek, Cod. Cent. IV 40 (N1); Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Mgo 4 (B7). In Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Mgo 12 (14th century: 1345), the treatise is ascribed to Meister Eckhart.

⁹⁵ See Petrus W. Tax, “‘Gaesdoncksche Traktate,’” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 2, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1980), 1099–1101, and *Het Gaesdonckse-tractatenhandschrift. Olim hs. Gaesdonck, Collegium Augustinianum, ms. 16*. Diplomatische editie op basis van foto’s uit de Titus Brandsmacollectie bezorgd door Marinus K.A. Van den Berg met medewerking van Amand Berteloot en Thom Mertens en een beschrijving

Pseudo-Eckhartian treatise *Der înslac* (Pfeiffer, Tr. II). The text describes the two “ways” of Christ, that of his humanity and that of his divinity, which are meant to provide orientation for the human person.⁹⁶

Statements from Pfeiffer’s Treatises II (*Der înslac*) and XVIII (*Diu glôse über das êwangelium S. Johannis*), as well as *dicta* attributed to Eckhart, were included in the treatise *On perfection* (or *Six exercises for perfection*) which was “composed” by an anonymous author in the 14th century, drawing on materials from the vernacular mysticism.⁹⁷

The text describes six exercises which lead the human person to perfection and to the vision of God. Beginning with self-knowledge, withdrawal into oneself, and *Gelassenheit*, the human person attains the divine knowledge, ascends to divine love, and is finally enlightened by the divine light. The author drew inspiration from Meister Eckhart, who is also quoted explicitly (Pfeiffer, Spr. 4 and 5); he transforms Eckhart’s speculative teaching into the practical, concrete application of the “exercises.” This treatise, which is as yet unpublished, is a document of the reception of Eckhart, as we also see from the fact that Lienhart Peuger made excerpts from this text for his own composite treatise *Von der sêle werdikeit und eigenschaft*.⁹⁸

The treatise *Von den drîn fragen* also belongs to the reception of Eckhart. With its ca. 42 known textual witnesses, it has a wider transmission than any authentic writing by Eckhart. The transmission encompasses the German and Dutch linguistic areas and spans the period from around 1380 (the oldest textual witness) to the 16th century. The focal point is in the Alemannic area, where the text probably originated. This treatise is also the model for Merswin’s *Buoch von den drien durchbrûchen* and for the

met een codicologische reconstructie van den bron door Hans Kienhorst (Hilversum: 2005).

⁹⁶ See Volker Honemann, “Franke, Johannes,” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 2, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1980), 800–02. Editions of the treatise: Franz Pfeiffer, “Predigten und Sprüche deutscher Mystiker I” (note 6 above), 209–58, see no. VIII, 243–51; and Wilhelm Preger, “Kritische Studien zu Meister Eckhart,” *Zeitschrift für historische Theologie* 34 (1864), 161–81, and *ibid.*, 36 (1866), 488 (Introduction: “Sanctus Paulus sprichtet...”).

⁹⁷ See Kurt Ruh, “‘Von Vollkommenheit’ (‘Sechs Übungen zur Vollkommenheit’),” in *Die deutsche Literatur im Mittelalter. Verfasserlexikon* 10, ed. Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1999), 493–96. The text has no title; or else a title is formulated arbitrarily by the copyist. On the identification of the Eckhart material, see Spamer, “Zur Überlieferung” (note 6 above), 321f. n. 16. However, all the correspondences identified by Spamer are identical quotations from authorities. Ruh suggests that the provenance of this treatise, which was transmitted in the entire German and Dutch areas, is Middle Germany.

⁹⁸ See Löser, *Meister Eckhart in Melk* (note 13 above), 78–81.

anchoritesses' sermon in the *Meisterbuch* which Merswin ascribed to the Friend of God from the Oberland.

The three questions discuss the mystical *triplex via* of the "beginning, growing, and perfect life," and describe: (1) the "breakthrough;" (2) the *Abgeschiedenheit*; and (3) the *unio* with God. "The closeness to Meister Eckhart is unmistakable," although Eckhart himself did not employ the structure of the gradual path. The author may have borrowed it from Tauler, whose thinking also provided inspiration here.⁹⁹ Meister Eckhart is mentioned by name four times. Three of the statements ascribed to him can be identified as literal quotations from Eckhart.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ See Kurt Ruh, "Von den drin fragen," in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 2, ed. Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1980), 234f., and Johannes G. Mayer, "Pseudo-taulerische Schriften," in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters* 9, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1995), 649–52. Edition is in Heinrich Seuse Denifle, *Taulers Bekehrung* (Strasbourg: 1879), 137–43.

¹⁰⁰ "Hie von sprach meister egghart: Etlich lút nement got als er in lúchtet und smekket; die nehmen lúhten und smekken und nement gottes nit" ["About this, Meister Eckhart said: Some people take God as he appears to them and delights them; they take the appearance and the delight, and do not take God"] (Denifle, 138, 20–23); corresponds to Pfeiffer (ed.), *Meister Eckhart* (note 9 above), Supplementary sermon, 685, 22f. (identified by Josef Quint, *Neue Handschriftenfunde zur Überlieferung der deutschen Werke Meister Eckharts und seiner Schule* 1, [Stuttgart: 1940], 66). "Von disem durchbruch sprach meister egghart: Under got und under gotheit ist als verre underscheid als der himel ob der erde" ["Of this breakthrough, Meister Eckhart said: Between God and divinity there is as great a difference as the heaven is far above the earth"] (Denifle, 141, 21–23; unidentified). "Nun ist ein frag: als ain mench, der vor in einem vernunftigen leben gegangen hat, der waisz doch vil; dz sint alles bild. Wie mag er denne stan an bild als do er nit was? Dz. merkent. Meister Ekkhart sprichet: hette ich allú bilde in miner vernunft die alle vernünftigen menschen ie empfinden, stuent ich der an eigenschaft mit tueyende und mit lassen, mit vor mit nach, denne daz ich indisem gegenwertigen nue fry und ledig stuend und alleine warte was got von mir haben woelte, und dem vor allen dingen volgete und genuog were, so stuend ich an hinernüsse aller bilde also gewerlich als do ich nit enwas, und dz beneme mir nit allú dú werk die ich je gewürckte" ["Now there is a question: How is it possible for a person who has previously lived in a rational life and knows many things, all of which are images, to exist without images—as he was when he did not exist? Pay attention. Meister Eckhart says: If I possessed in my reason all the images that all rational persons have ever received, and if I behaved towards these images without qualities (with doing and refraining from doing, with before and after), so that I stood free and empty in this present 'now' and waited only for what God wanted to have from me, and followed this and served it, then I would stand without the hindrances of all images as truly as at the time when I did not exist; and no work of all those I had ever performed would take that from me"] (Denifle, 142, 15–143, 1); corresponds to Meister Eckhart, Pr. 2; DW I, 25, 2–26, 5 (identified by Quint, *Neue Handschriftenfunde*, 26 n. 1). "Dar zo sprichet meister Ekart: der mensch der muoss gar gelassen sin der gottes wort hoeren sol, wan dz selb dz da hoeret ist dz selbe dz da gehoeret wird" ["On this, Meister Eckhart says: The one who is to hear God's word must be wholly *gelassen*, for that which hears is the same as that which is heard"] (Denifle, 143, 7–10); corresponds to Meister Eckhart, Pr. 12; DW I, 193, 6–8 (identified by Quint, *Neue Handschriften*, 193 n. 3).

Similarly, a lengthy quotation from a sermon by Eckhart, though without mentioning the Master by name, is found in the treatise *Diu reissunge und die bewisunge zuo dem beschouwende leben*, a brief 14th-century text which moves “on the lines of Eckhart’s teaching about *Abgeschiedenheit*.”¹⁰¹ It begins by speaking of the following of Christ in poverty and humility: on this basis, one can attain the life where one sees God. It is in this context that the anonymous author elaborates the teaching about *Abgeschiedenheit*, about the birth of God in the soul, and about the *scintilla animae*. His source for this last point is Eckhart’s Sermon 82.¹⁰²

Finally, let us refer briefly to the anonymous 14th-century treatise *Geistbuch*, which is transmitted in an Upper German and a Dutch version. The text engages in a debate with Meister Eckhart’s thinking, though it does not mention him by name or quote him literally. With its starting point in the scriptural passage *Sequere me*, the unknown author speaks of the following of Christ as the abandoning of one’s own will: this ultimately leads to union with God. One attains the temporary *unio* by means of four stages, as a beginner, as one who is growing, as one who is perfect, and as a supra-perfect human being.¹⁰³

In the third part of his edition of Eckhart, Franz Pfeiffer collected 70 shorter pieces under the title *Sprüche* (“Aphorisms”).¹⁰⁴ These are *dicta* attributed to Eckhart, brief dialogues between Eckhart or an anonymous master and his audience, sermon-like outlines, questions, proverbial

¹⁰¹ Janota, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur* (note 5 above), 74.

¹⁰² See Kurt Ruh, “*Diu reissunge und die bewisunge zuo dem beschouwende leben*,” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 7, ed. Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1989), 1217–19. The treatise is printed on the basis of the Basel manuscript, Universitätsbibliothek B XI 10 (Ba1) in Wilhelm Preger, “Kritische Studien zu Meister Eckhart,” *Zeitschrift für historische Theologie* 36 (1866), 435–517, see 488–501. The section “davon hat got der sele geben ein goetlich liecht . . . zeglicher wis als der güsse ein trophen wassers in ein fuoder wines, der wirt nit zenichte” (Preger, 496, 25–498,15) corresponds to Meister Eckhart, Pr. 82; DW III, 425, 8–430, 6 with omissions, transpositions, and additions; for a precise analysis, see Josef Quint (ed.), *Meister Eckhart, Die deutschen Werke* 3 (Stuttgart: 1976), 417f.

¹⁰³ See Karin Schneider, “*‘Geistbuch’*,” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 2, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1980), 1157f. The treatise has not been edited. An edition of the Middle High German and Middle Dutch versions by Dagmar Gottschall (University of Lecce), Wybren Scheepma, and Geert Warnar (University of Leiden) is in preparation. See also Alessandra Beccarisi, “Meister Eckhart und die Frage nach den Quellen in *Des Gheest Boeck*,” in *Universität, Konzil, Stadt. Intellektuelle Kultur am Rhein (1300–1550)*, ed. Laurent Cesalli, Nadja Germann, and Marten J.F.M. Hoenen (Turnhout: 2007), 171–202, and Dagmar Gottschall, “Mystik in Zerstreuung. Die Überlieferung des spätmittelalterlichen *Geistbuchs*,” in *Die Zukunft des Spätmittelalters*, ed. Freimut Löser, Klaus Vogelsang, and Klaus Wolf (forthcoming).

¹⁰⁴ See Pfeiffer (ed.), *Meister Eckhart* (note 9 above), 597–627. The German abbreviation “Spr.” is retained here.

sententiae, and finally (nn. 66–70) legendary narratives which became attached to the person of Eckhart. Most of the manuscript anthologies of mystical texts include materials of this kind, and Pfeiffer collected his 70 pieces from a great variety of codices. However, the textual form in which he found them in the manuscripts remains to be investigated: in the context of a collection of aphorisms,¹⁰⁵ as individual excerpts placed between longer texts, or even as *dicta* ascribed to Eckhart in composite treatises (as in the case of Spr. 4 and 5, which come from the treatise *On Perfection*; see above), or as excerpts in mosaic treatises (such as Spr. 3, 15, 22, 25, 29, 30, which are taken from Spamer's mosaic treatise; see above). No work at all has been done on the history of the transmission of the *Sprüche* edited by Pfeiffer. Up to now, roughly half of the fragments have been identified as fragments from authentic and Pseudo-Eckhartian sermons and treatises.

The extremely heterogeneous material presented by Pfeiffer as "Aphorisms" can be divided into three groups.

First, we have Spr. 1–30, in which no system can be discerned. To begin with, they include equivalences (i.e. cases where one aphorism is only a variant reading of another).¹⁰⁶ A considerable amount has been shown to be excerpts from genuine texts by Eckhart,¹⁰⁷ or else is found in Pseudo-Eckhartian materials.¹⁰⁸ Four aphorisms were included in the collection

¹⁰⁵ The only known compiler of a collection of spiritual teachings, legends, and aphorisms of various provenance in around 250 texts is Pseudo-Engelhart of Ebrach; see Pseudo-Engelhart of Ebrach, *Das Buch der Vollkommenheit*, ed. Karin Schneider (Berlin: 2006).

¹⁰⁶ Spr. 4 corresponds to 10; a passage in 18 (602, 24–27) corresponds to a passage in 20 (603, 2–5); a passage in 9 (600, 1–3) corresponds to a passage in 21 (603, 14–16); see Spamer, "Zur Überlieferung" (note 6 above), 401, and Georg Steer, *Meister Eckhart, Die deutschen Werke* 4/1 (Stuttgart: 2003), xi.

¹⁰⁷ Spr. 3 (598, 15–20): Fragment from Eckhart, Pr. 106; DW IV, 687f. with n. 13, and 598, 9–11 from Eckhart, Pr. 4; DW I, 72, 11–13—Spr. 12: Fragment from Eckhart, Pr. 73; DW III, 269, 3–7—Spr. 18 (602, 24–27): Fragment from Eckhart, Pr. 100; DW IV, 273, 1–3—Spr. 20: Fragment from Eckhart, Pr. 100; DW IV, 272, 19–20 and 273, 1–3—Spr. 22 (603, 34–36): Fragment from Eckhart, Pfeiffer, Pr. 5 (= Quint 65), 33, 13–16; the text was omitted by Quint, as an interpolation—Spr. 26: Fragment from Eckhart, Pfeiffer, Pr. 44 (= Steer 110; text not yet edited), 149, 35–150, 12; on the state of the text, see Georg Steer, *Meister Eckhart, Die deutschen Werke* 4 (Stuttgart: 2003), 776—Spr. 28: Fragment from Eckhart, Pr. 78; DW III, 351, 6–7.

¹⁰⁸ Spr. 4 and 5 come from the treatise *On perfection*. Pfeiffer took them out of context from the manuscript Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 2757; see Löser, *Meister Eckhart in Melk* (note 13 above), 79–81. Spr. 9 is found in a more detailed version in the printed Basel text of Tauler (1521), fol. 169vb; similarly, Spr. 19 is found in a much expanded version in the printed Cologne text of Tauler (1543), fols. 17vb–28rb; see Spamer, "Zur Überlieferung" (note 6 above), 401. The conclusion of Spr. 25 (604, 32–34) is found in Pfeiffer's Treatise VI *Sister Katrei*, 463, 7–11.

of aphorisms by Pseudo-Engelhart of Ebrach;¹⁰⁹ nr. 23 is a prayer of expiation which is attributed in all the manuscripts to Meister Eckhart and was included in the repertoire of the prayer books.¹¹⁰ In the case of the unidentified aphorisms, the attribution to Meister Eckhart poses fundamental problems. Usually, they were included by Pfeiffer because he found them in proximity to Eckhartian materials; often, he extracted them from larger textual contexts.¹¹¹

Secondly, Spr. 31–48 form a special unit, since they are translations from Eckhart's Latin œuvre. Pfeiffer printed Spr. 31–48 from a manuscript in Giessen which is lost today;¹¹² it came from the convent of the Premonstratensian nuns at Altenberg, and Pfeiffer dated it to the 14th century (*Anonymus Altenbergensis*). Denifle already saw that this is in part a free translation from Eckhart's *Expositio libri Sapientiae*.¹¹³ Josef Quint discovered almost the same stock of aphorisms in a later manuscript of the 15th century from the former Charterhouse of Buxheim near Memmingen (*Anonymus Buxheimensis*).¹¹⁴ Each of these manuscripts contains pieces which are lacking in the other. The material that appears in the form of 17 aphorisms in Pfeiffer's presentation goes back to a mosaic treatise in which an unknown translator excerpted what seemed to him important in Eckhart's exposition *Super Ecclesiastici*, ch. 24 (7 texts), in his *Expositio libri Sapientiae* (ca. 50 texts), in the second exposition of Genesis (1 text), and in *Sermo XXX*, 2 (1 text), and translated these into the vernacular.¹¹⁵ Quint employed two of these "aphorisms" to demonstrate Eckhart's authorship of Pr. 14.¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁹ These are Spr. 17, 18, 19, and 25, which were included in Pseudo-Engelhart's collection of aphorisms as nr. 35, 37, 145, and 34; see Schneider (ed.), *Pseudo-Engelhart von Ebrach* (note 105 above), 18–20 and 65; with the exception of nr. 34, they are attributed to Meister Eckhart; in Pfeiffer's version, all four aphorisms are attributed to Meister Eckhart.

¹¹⁰ See Spamer, "Zur Überlieferung" (note 6 above), 401, and Löser, *Meister Eckhart in Melk* (note 13 above), 316.

¹¹¹ For details, see Spamer, "Zur Überlieferung," 401f.

¹¹² See Pfeiffer (ed.), *Meister Eckhart*, (note 9 above), ix.

¹¹³ See Heinrich Seuse Denifle, "Meister Eckharts lateinische Schriften und die Grundanschauung seiner Lehre," *Archiv für Literatur- und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters* 2 (1886), 417–615, see 429–32.

¹¹⁴ See Quint, *Neue Handschriften* (note 100 above), 7–10: this is the manuscript Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, mfg 986 (B30) from 1448. On this manuscript, see also Rüdiger Blumrich, *Marquard von Lindau, Deutsche Predigten. Untersuchungen und Edition* (Tübingen: 1994), 17–19.

¹¹⁵ See Koch, "Meister Eckharts Weiterwirken" (note 8 above), 446f.

¹¹⁶ These are Spr. 46 and 47, which refer to Pr. 14; see Josef Quint (ed.), *Meister Eckhart. Die deutschen Werke* 1, (Stuttgart: 1958), 227f.

Thirdly, we have Spr. 49–65, which are transmitted as a block in the manuscript Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, mgo 12 (B1) from the 14th century (1345).¹¹⁷ The codex comes from Alsace and is attested in Hagenau at the beginning of the 15th century. Obviously, it subsequently came to Cologne, where Daniel Sudermann acquired it. It consists of four parts that were bound together only at a secondary stage. The first part contains numerous Eckhart texts, to which Sudermann explicitly refers.¹¹⁸ With the exceptions of nr. 49–53 and 60, which have not yet been identified, the aphorism material edited by Pfeiffer comes from sermons by Eckhart¹¹⁹ and Pseudo-Eckhart.¹²⁰ All of the last five aphorisms (61–65) are excerpts from the Pseudo-Eckhartian sermon Pfeiffer LXXVII, which is contained only in the printed Basel edition of Tauler (1521).¹²¹

As in the case of the anonymous translator of Eckhart's Latin exposition of Scripture, here too we have the work of an anonymous compiler who gleaned the fruits of his perusal of Eckhart's sermons (and of texts which he regarded as Eckhart's work) and assembled these passages to form edifying reading matter. These texts deal with the being of the soul and the being of God, with the knowledge of God and the *vita contemplativa*, and about the birth of God in the soul—core themes of Eckhart's activity as a preacher, and sometimes making high speculative claims. In many places, the work of assembling such collections of excerpts must have been part of the daily life of religious communities.¹²² Spr. 31–48 and 49–65 show that Eckhart's texts—with the conscious mention of the author's name—served for private, meditative reading of this kind. In one happy instance, the name of such a compiler is in fact known: Freimut Löser has drawn attention to a collection of aphorisms from the works of Eckhart which

¹¹⁷ See Herman Degering, *Kurzes Verzeichnis der germanischen Handschriften der Preussischen Staatsbibliothek 3: Handschriften im Oktavformat und Register zu Band I–III* (Leipzig: 1932), 5f.; Spr. 53–65 and 49–52 are found on fols. 16v–22v.

¹¹⁸ On the manuscript, see Klimanek, *Verzeichnis* (note 11 above).

¹¹⁹ Spr. 54 (concluding sentence): excerpt from Eckhart, Pr. 42; DW II, 309, 3–5—Spr. 55: excerpt from Eckhart, Pr. 66; DW III, 117, 6–8—Spr. 56 (619, 33–620, 3): excerpt from Eckhart, Pr. 66; DW III, 123, 11–124, 5—Spr. 57: excerpt from Eckhart, Pr. 13; DW I, 218, 9–219, 3—Spr. 58: excerpt from Eckhart, Pr. 13; DW I, 216, 3–7.

¹²⁰ Spr. 59 is a fragment from a Pseudo-Eckhartian sermon found in London, British Library, Egerton Ms. 2188 (Lo3), which transmits inter alia Eckhart, Pr. 16a; see Spamer, "Zur Überlieferung" (note 6 above), 399.

¹²¹ See Spamer, "Zur Überlieferung" (note 6 above), 400—Spr. 61: excerpt from Pfeiffer LXXVII, 250, 11–12—Spr. 62: 250, 1–4—Spr. 63: 250, 18–20—Spr. 64: 250, 20–22 and 24–28—Spr. 65: 250, 29–251, 19.

¹²² See Wybren Scheepma, *Medieval Religious Women in the Low Countries: The Modern Devotion, the Canonesses of Windesheim, and their Writings* (Woodbridge: 2004).

was assembled by Lienhart Peuger in Melk.¹²³ Here, Peuger mostly made excerpts from texts which he had copied out in the two great Eckhart manuscripts in Melk (see above). None of the aphorisms edited by Pfeiffer is found here, since “aphorisms” are not *sententiae* transmitted by word of mouth and which are then written down at some time or another, but the notes made by a reader who studied a collection of Eckhart’s sermons.

The transmission of Spr. 66–70 displays a specific dynamic which will be discussed when we look at the legends about Eckhart.

The most problematic part in Pfeiffer’s edition of Eckhart is the fourth section with the title *Liber positionum*, which Pfeiffer borrowed from the list of Eckhart’s writings in Trithemius, *De scriptoribus ecclesiae*. Pfeiffer himself admits that he finds no external attestation of this “only loosely connected book” which consists of theological-philosophical questions, such that he could ascribe it to Meister Eckhart.¹²⁴ It is a scholastic collection of *quaestiones*, assembling 162 texts in the vernacular. Its material is transmitted in manuscripts of mystical anthologies, varying in extent and in arrangement, and always anonymously, “only in the midst of Eckhart’s writings.”¹²⁵

The extremely complex and tangled history of its transmission still awaits thorough study. As far as I know, the only scholar who has investigated this up to now is Spamer, who ultimately threw in the towel in view of the “mass of material which fluctuates without any rules.”¹²⁶ We may sum up the situation by noting that there is no manuscript in which the pieces of the *Liber positionum* are found in the number and sequence in which Pfeiffer prints them.¹²⁷ This means that the external presentation of Part 4 of Pfeiffer’s edition of Eckhart is the product of the editor himself.

¹²³ See Löser, *Eckhart in Melk* (note 13 above), 86–92. This is the manuscript Melk, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 235, fols. 331rb–336rb, written by Peuger around 1440, with the marginal note: “Nota. Dy hernach geschriben sprüch sind genomen aws der ler Maister Ekcharts von Paris” [“Note: The aphorisms written in what follows are taken from the teaching of Meister Eckhart of Paris”]. Löser prints the collection of aphorisms, with the identification of the individual excerpts: *ibid.*, 512–36.

¹²⁴ Pfeiffer (ed.), *Meister Eckhart* (note 9 above), xii.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ Spamer, “Zur Überlieferung” (note 6 above), 408–18, see 416.

¹²⁷ Only the 15th-century manuscript St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 972a (G₁) transmits the *Liber positionum* in almost the same extent as the text printed by Pfeiffer, though in a different sequence and repeatedly interrupted by other textual material; see Spamer, “Zur Überlieferung,” 410–13, with a complete description of the contents. See the recent presentation of all the manuscripts which transmit parts of the *Liber positionum*, with the precise identification of these parts, in Vogl, *Der “Spiegel der Seele”* (note 88 above), 93–99.

In the historical context of their transmission, most of the *quaestiones* or aphorisms (and here too, the demarcation vis-à-vis Pfeiffer's *Sprüche* section is problematic) are gathered together to form mosaic treatises or even sermons, which often bear a title of their own. The great majority are in textual proximity to the sermons and treatises that are printed in Pfeiffer's edition of Eckhart. Spamer directly concludes from this that a part of the *Liber positionum* consists of fragments of sermons. The "pure" questions may be German translations of favorite passages from the church fathers, or else individual questions which came up again and again in scholastic and monastic life. As yet, however, no passage from the *Liber positionum* has been identified.

The only constant element is the group of *quaestiones* 5, 121–36, 138, 140, 141, 148, 2, which appears in close proximity at least three times and can be read as a dialogue between a master and a disciple about subtle philosophical questions. It is noteworthy that this group is presented in two cases as the continuation of Jundt 3, a vernacular translation from the *Clavis physicae* (see above).¹²⁸ This group may be an independent complex of transmission, as is also seen from the fact that precisely this series is missing in manuscripts which otherwise contain a large number of questions from the *Liber positionum*; for example, in Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, mgq 191 (B4), or in a manuscript not yet mentioned by Pfeiffer and Spamer, Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, mgo 4 (B7) (see above).

Let us conclude with two examples of how new texts could be created out of the material of the *Liber positionum*. In Melk, Lienhart Peuger employed *Liber positionum* 149.154, six pieces about the sacrament of the altar and the right way to receive it, to fashion a brief treatise *On the sacrament*. He combines n. 149–54, with his typical large-scale editorial interventions, and ascribes the result to Meister Eckhart: "Nota vom Sakrament guet frag Meister ekchart von paris" ["Note: good questions about the sacrament, Meister Eckhart from Paris"].¹²⁹

¹²⁸ This sequence of questions is found in Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, B XI 10 (Ba1), fols. 190r–213r; St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 972a (G1), 126–50; Strasbourg, Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire, Ms. 2795 (Str3), fols. 275v–287v; a part of the sequence (140, 141, 148, 5) is also found in Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Mgo 12 (B1); see Spamer, "Zur Überlieferung," 416.

¹²⁹ See Spamer, "Zur Überlieferung," 414 n. 19, and Löser, *Meister Eckhart in Melk* (note 13 above), 154–56 and 195. Peuger's treatise *On the sacrament* is found in Melk, Stiftsbibliothek, Co. 1569, fols. 85r–87r, and Melk, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 1865, fols. 134rb–135rb, though here with the incipit: "Hie sol man ettleich frag hörn vom Sacrament als dy maister von

An anonymous redactor combined a sermon of Johannes Franke of Cologne and several fragments from the *Liber positionum* to form a new sermon text, which can be found today in the Nuremberg Sermon Book.¹³⁰ The sermon of Johannes Franke is in the collection *Paradisus animae intelligentis* (Par. an. 5) without the "appendix" from the *Liber positionum*. However, it closes with the Latin exhortation: *rogemus etc.*,¹³¹ which may be an indication that originally, the questions of the *Liber positionum* followed at this point. In that case, they would be the work of Johannes Franke, and the redactor of the *Paradisus* would have eliminated them in his work of abbreviation. But given our lack of knowledge of the textual history of the *Liber positionum*, these remain pointless speculations.¹³²

paris schreiben und sprechen..." ["Here one will hear some questions about the sacrament, as the masters of Paris write and speak..."]. Löser (155) presents other textual witnesses for n. 149–54 as a separate textual block separated from other pieces of the *Liber positionum*, though only in St Florian, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. XI 123, fols. 37r–38v: here with an introduction like Jostes 45. *Lib. pos.* 149–54 follow, concluding with the Pseudo-Eckhartian sermon Pfeiffer 70 about the names of the Corpus Christi feast, with a longer additional passage; see Josef Quint, *Fundbericht zur handschriftlichen Überlieferung der deutschen Werke Meister Eckharts und anderer Mystikertexte 2* (Stuttgart: 1969), 70–72.

¹³⁰ Jostes (ed.), *Meister Eckhart und seine Jünger* (note 32 above), n. 43, 42–47. The texts involved are: Johannes Franke of Cologne, Sermon 5 on the word of Scripture: "Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum" (Lk. 1:38; in Jostes, the scriptural text is missing), 42, 15–43, 25; *Lib. pos.* 138 (43, 26–38); *Lib. pos.* 139 (only the title) (43, 38–39); *Lib. pos.* 140 (43, 39–41, 16); *Lib. pos.* 141 (44, 16–21); *Lib. pos.* 142 (44, 21–33); *Lib. pos.* 148 (44, 33–45, 27); *Lib. pos.* 120 (45, 27–46, 3); *Lib. pos.* 162 (46, 3–47, 19); "S. Paulus spricht" (unidentified; 47, 20–27); "Bischof Albrecht spricht" (unidentified; likewise in Eckhart, Pr. 80; DW III, 385, 1–4; see 47, 27–31); see Kurt Ruh in the Afterword to *Meister Eckhart und seine Jünger*, 209.

¹³¹ Philipp Strauch (ed.), *Paradisus anime intelligentis (Paradis der fornuftigen seele). Aus der Oxforder Handschrift Cod. Laud. Misc. 479 nach E. Sievers Abschrift*, 2nd ed. with an afterword by Niklaus Largier and Gilbert Fournier (Berlin: 1998), 18f. The shortened conclusion runs: "so ist ein vrage, ob der heilige geist alleine worchte... respondeo: noch der ordenunge gibit man deme sone daz eine und deme helegen geiste daz andere. rogemus etc." ["it is therefore a question whether the Holy Spirit works alone... I reply: according to the due order, one attributes one thing to the Son and another to the Holy Spirit. Let us ask, etc."]. See, on the other hand, the version in Jostes, 43: "Nu ist frag under den meistern, ob di werch der heiligen drivaldicheit geteilt sint, oder ob der heilig geist allein wurchet... Di werch der heiligen drivaldicheit sint ungeteilt, doch nach der ordenung gibt man dem sun daz ein, dem heiligen geist daz ander" ["Now, among the masters the question is posed whether the works of the Holy Trinity are undivided, or whether the Holy Spirit works alone... The works of the Holy Trinity are undivided, but according to due order one attributes the one to the Son and the other to the Holy Spirit"] [end of Par. an. 5] "Nu ist ein frag: wart daz ewig wort enphangen in Marien personlich oder wesentlich..." ["Now there is a question: Was the eternal Word conceived in Mary personally or essentially..."].

¹³² Spamer, "Zur Übelieferung" (note 6 above), 417, observed that *Lib. pos.* 120 and 162 usually follow each other in the transmission; he interprets both pieces as fragments of sermons. The angelology of nr. 162 ("Sant Dionysius sprichet, daz die obristen geiste sich ergiezen in die nidristen...") ["St. Dionysius says that the highest spirits pour themselves

2. LEGENDS ABOUT ECKHART

Legends about Eckhart, which bear witness to his continued existence in popular memory, grew up at an early date. In this context, we shall also speak of two treatises in dialogue form, in which elements of the Eckhartian teaching are discussed by Eckhart and a partner from circles which were critical of the church: *Eckhart and the layman* and *Sister Katrei*. These two dialogues had a great impact in the border area between Germany and the Netherlands, where an intensive literary debate with the "heretic" Eckhart took place.¹³³

As in the case of his predecessor and confrère Albert the Great, legendary narratives were woven around the person of Meister Eckhart, bearing witness to the very special impression that his preaching made on his hearers and listeners. However, whereas Albert is described as a great scholar versed in all the arts, the figure of Eckhart appears as the great preacher and master in theological questions (e.g. in the numerous aphorisms which are placed on his lips).¹³⁴ But in four of the five legendary narratives which Pfeiffer edited as Spr. 66–70,¹³⁵ the great preacher takes on a very strange position as the representative of the "masters of reading" who disputes with one or several "master(s) of life" and is instructed by them (*Meister Eckhart und the poor man I and II; Meister Eckhart's daughter*, and *Meister Eckhart's symposium*). This basic situation seems to have developed at a very early date, on the "humus" of religious circles of laypersons such as the circle of the Friends of God or the Beguine communities in the large cities along the Rhine; the presupposition seems to be the condemnation of Eckhart and the promulgation of the bull *In agro dominico*. The very traditional legend *Meister Eckhart and the naked boy* points us rather to the sphere of monastic literature.

It is striking that the dialogue partner who instructs Eckhart makes use of teachings that are certainly Eckhartian. It is clear that in these circles it

into the lowest..."] is surely an echo of the *Coelestis hierarchia* of Pseudo-Dionysius; see Volker Honemann, "(Pseudo-)Dionysius Areopagita," in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 2, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1980), 154–66, see 160.

¹³³ See Wybren Scheepma, "Meister Eckhart in de Nederlanden. Rezeption und Überlieferung im vierzehnten Jahrhundert," in *Exemplar. Festschrift für Kurt Otto Seidel*, ed. Rüdiger Brandt and Dieter Lau (Frankfurt am Main: 2008), 9–54.

¹³⁴ See Spr. 1–6, 8–11, 14–29, 31–44, 46–49, 52–53.

¹³⁵ See Kurt Ruh, "Eckhart-Legenden," in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 2, ed. Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1980), 350–53, and Spamer, "Zur Überlieferung" (note 6 above), 403–08.

was not the content of Eckhart's speculative remarks that was criticized. Rather, the lack of practical application and of the visionary encounter with God was understood as a deficit.

This basic situation is found again—in an expanded form which is obviously more aggressive towards the figure of the “master of reading”—in the treatises in the form of a dialogue in which Eckhart is a dialogue partner: *Sister Katrei* and *Eckhart and the layman*.

Meister Eckhart and the poor man I (Pfeiffer, *Sprüche*, n. 66): initially, this brief narrative has nothing to do with Meister Eckhart. An unnamed high “master of reading” presents an *exemplum* in his capitular sermon. In this story, a theoretician in search of the truth is instructed by a practical man who possesses the truth (“ein man . . . von dem liest man in der heiligen geschrift, der begerte wol aht jâr, daz im got zeigete einen menschen, der in wiste den wec der wârheit”) [“a man . . . about whom one reads in sacred scripture, who desired for eight years that God would show him one who would lead him on the path of the truth”] (Pfeiffer, 623, 14–16).¹³⁶ Finally, the searcher for the truth is heard by God, and a divine voice sends him to the church. Outside the church, he finds a poor man and wishes him “Good morning.” A conversation develops: the poor man, who appears to be in great misery, counts himself happy, because he has surrendered completely to the will of God and is perfectly content. Even if God were to throw him into hell, he would hold fast to him in love and humility, for “ich wil lieber in der helle sîn unde daz ich got habe, denne in dem himelrîche und daz ich got nit enhabe” [“I would rather be in hell and have God, than be in the kingdom of heaven and not have God”] (Pfeiffer, 624, 5–6).

The story in this *exemplum* proposes the Eckhartian teaching on poverty, and its final point quotes an authentic statement by Eckhart: “better with God in hell than without him in the kingdom of heaven.”¹³⁷ The brief

¹³⁶ In several textual witnesses, the narrative framework is omitted and the “man” is called a *master of reading*.

¹³⁷ See Eckhart, Sermo XXXIV, 2: “iustus iustitiae serviens plus eam amat quam se ipsum, ut si iustum portaret in se infernum vel diabolum, ipsum amaret, ipsi saperet, ipsum delectaret; et e converso: si iniustum portaret secum paradisum, deum ipsum, ipsi non saperet” [“The righteous person who serves righteousness loves it more than his own self, so that, if that which is righteous bore in itself hell or the devil, he would nevertheless love it and it would delight him and give him joy. And conversely, if that which is unrighteous were to bring with itself paradise, or even God himself, it would not delight him”] (Ernst Benz, Bruno Decker, and Joseph Koch (eds.), Meister Eckhart, *Die lateinischen Werke* 4 [Stuttgart: 1956], 298 n. 343); and Eckhart, Pr. 6 (“Iusti vivent in aeternum”); DW I, 103, 4–8: “Jâ, wære alliu diu pine, die die hânt, die in der helle sint . . . wære diu besast bi der gerechticheit, sie

sermon story was very popular, as its wide manuscript transmission from the 14th century onwards attests. It even exists in a Latin version and in a German–Latin mixed text.¹³⁸ The dialogue between the searcher for truth and the poor man was included as the *Good Morning exemplum* in the three-part mystical miracle of the *Brother with the seven sacks*, which was widespread throughout the German–Dutch linguistic area.¹³⁹

This *exemplum* is often transmitted in connection with *Meister Eckhart and the Poor Man II* (Pfeiffer, *Sprüche*, n. 67),¹⁴⁰ which is a slight variant in which the narrative framework is missing. The searcher for truth, who is identified in a few manuscripts with Meister Eckhart,¹⁴¹ seeks instruction in the dialogue with the practical man who possesses the truth.

Meister Eckhart wishes a poor man “Good morning.” He replies, as in I, that he has never had a bad morning, and this leads into a dialogue. The poor man declares that he is united to the will of God, and Eckhart asks where he found God, where he left him, and who he (i.e. the poor man) is. The answer, “A king,” prompts the questions: what does the poor man rule over, and where is his kingdom? Eckhart recognizes that the poor man is holy, and finally asks him how he arrived at this holiness. Here too we have the typical communication situation: Eckhart as representative of the “masters of reading,” the learned theoreticians in theology, is confronted with the existential praxis of a layman who successfully implements in his life the speculative teaching of the Master and who (unlike the Master) has arrived at the knowledge of the truth. God tells the seeker to go to the church, and there he finds instruction.

It is correct to call *Meister Eckhart and the poor man I* and *II* “legends about Eckhart,” since the first *exemplum* takes up authentic Eckhartian teachings and the second, with which it is often linked in the course of

[i.e. the righteous persons] enaheten sîn niht einen bast; sô vaste stânt sie an gote und an der gerechticheit” [“Indeed, were all the torment of those who are in hell... linked to justice, they would not pay the least heed to it; for they hold so fast to God and to justice”]; see Ruh, “Eckhart-Legenden” (note 135 above), 351.

¹³⁸ See Ruh, “Eckhart-Legenden,” and Quint, *Neue Handschriftenfunde* (note 100 above), 56, 65, 111, 138, 144, 185, 235, 268.

¹³⁹ See Kurt Ruh, “Der Bruder mit den sieben Säckchen,” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 1, ed. Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1978), 1045–47.

¹⁴⁰ On the transmission, see Ruh, “Eckhart-Legenden” (note 135 above), 351; the brief dialogue also exists in a strongly divergent Dutch version, see Cornelis G.N. de Vooy, “Meister Eckart en de Nederlandse mystiek I,” *Nederlandsch Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* NS 3 (1905), 50–92.

¹⁴¹ Cologne, Stadtarchiv, GB 4° 36 (16th century), fol. 61v: “Meyster eckart sprach zo eyne armen menschen...” [“Meister Eckhart said to a poor man...”].

transmission, is only a variation on the first. The teaching about poverty, which is the most important point in the reception and the criticism of Eckhart, appears in a popular context.

Meister Eckhart and the Naked Boy (Pfeiffer, *Sprüche*, n. 68) belongs rather to the traditional miracle stories in the monastic sphere,¹⁴² although the dialogue has parallels to *Meister Eckhart and the poor man II*.¹⁴³ The text presents a brief dialogue between Meister Eckhart and God in the form of a naked boy. In answer to Eckhart's questions, the boy replies that he comes from God, whom he has left behind in virtuous hearts. He wants to return to God, and he is king in the kingdom of the heart. Eckhart offers him a garment, but the boy refuses this offer—since then he would not be a king—and vanishes. The dénouement reveals that it was God himself who was passing the time (*ein kurzewile*) with Eckhart.

The text has parallels to the miracle story, *The Twelve Good Men and the Youth*.¹⁴⁴

The legendary narrative *Meister Eckhart's Daughter* (Pfeiffer, *Sprüche*, nr. 69), takes place at the monastery door.¹⁴⁵ As in *Eckhart and the Poor Man I and II*, the great "master of reading" is confronted with the existential wisdom of a layperson who is his superior in insight and knowledge. A female penitent ("confessional daughter") asks at the monastery door for Meister Eckhart. When the porter asks what name he should say, she replies: "I do not know." She declares to the astonished porter that she is neither a virgin nor married nor a widow, neither woman nor man, neither lord nor maidservant nor manservant. The porter fetches Eckhart,

¹⁴² The legend is set in a Dominican monastery; Eckhart takes the boy into his cell. Stories of the apparition of the Christ child are a staple element in the *vitae* of sisters in religious communities; see, e.g. Engelbert Krebs, "Die Mystik in Adelhausen," in *Festgabe Heinrich Finke zum 7. August 1904*, ed. Gottfried Buschbell et al. (Münster in Westfalen: 1904), 81, and "Klosterneveln," 94–97.

¹⁴³ On the transmission, see Spamer, *Texte aus der deutschen Mystik* (note 91 above), 143f., and Spamer, "Zur Überlieferung" (note 6 above), 406f.; also Ruh, "Eckhart-Legenden" (note 135 above), 352. The legend is usually transmitted in the context of the collection of aphorisms by Engelhart of Ebrach; see Schneider (ed.), *Pseudo-Engelhart von Ebrach* (note 105 above), 64 n. 144. There is a versified version in Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August-Bibliothek, Cod. 2.4. Aug. 2°, fol. 208 rb–va.

¹⁴⁴ Printed in Spamer, *Texte aus der deutschen Mystik* (note 91 above), 145, following Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, mgo 65, fol. 32v; cf. Kurt Ruh, "Die zwölf guten Menschen und der Jüngling," in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 10, ed. Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1999), 1634f., and Spamer, "Zur Überlieferung" (note 6 above), 406f.

¹⁴⁵ It is transmitted across the entire German–Dutch linguistic area; see Spamer, *Texte der deutschen Mystik* (note 91 above), 152; Ruh, "Eckhart-Legenden" (note 135 above), 352; Spamer, "Zur Überlieferung" (note 6 above), 407.

telling him he will meet the “most extraordinary creature” that exists, and asks for permission to listen in on their conversation. The “daughter” tells Eckhart what she has told the porter, and when he asks her to explain this, she clothes her statement in the exegetical allegoresis of Eckhart’s preaching vocabulary: “wêr ich ein maget, sô stüende ich in miner êrsten unschulde; wêr ich denne ein wîp, sô gebêre ich daz êwige wort âne underlâz in miner sêle, . . . etc.” [“Were I a virgin, I would be in my first innocence; but were I a wife, I would unceasingly give birth to the eternal Word in my soul, . . . etc.”] (Pfeiffer, 625, 15–26). She runs through all the predicates and concludes: “Der allersament bin ich einez niht und bin ein dinc als ein ander dinc und loufe dâ hin” [“I am none of all of these, and I am a thing like any other thing and run on my way”] (Pfeiffer, 625, 25–26). Meister Eckhart confesses to his confreres that he has heard the *aller lûtersten menschen* (“the purest person of all”) whom he has ever met.

At its conclusion, the story is given a name, and is thereby “classified:” “Diz bîspil ist meister Eckhartes tohter genant” [“This *exemplum* is called ‘Meister Eckhart’s daughter’”]. The anonymous protagonist and her teaching are given a name. Spamer pointed out long ago the similarity between the legend *Meister Eckhart’s Daughter* and the treatise in dialogue form entitled *Sister Katrei* (Pfeiffer, Treatise VI).¹⁴⁶ One feature common to both texts is the “mystical surpassing of the speculative authority:” both the father confessor of *Sister Katrei* and Meister Eckhart acknowledge the mystical knowledge in the presence of their conferes (i.e. officially). The teaching of the *tohter* or of *swester Katrei* is confirmed.¹⁴⁷

The most widely diffused of the legends was *Meister Eckhart’s Symposium* (Pfeiffer, *Sprüche*, nr. 70), a table talk about Eckhart’s teaching on life. The participants are a poor man, a virgin, and Meister Eckhart. The symposium is transmitted in around 30 German and Dutch textual witnesses, sometimes with considerable variants.¹⁴⁸ There is even a Latin version.¹⁴⁹ In Codex Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, cpg 418 (14th

¹⁴⁶ See Spamer, “Zur Übelieferung” (note 6 above), 378.

¹⁴⁷ See Franz-Josef Schweitzer, *Der Freiheitsbegriff der deutschen Mystik. Seine Beziehung zur Ketzerei der “Brüder und Schwestern vom Freien Geist,” mit besonderer Rücksicht auf den pseudoeckhartischen Traktat “Schwester Katrei,”* (Frankfurt am Main: 1981), 167–72.

¹⁴⁸ On the transmission, see Ruh, “Eckhart-Legenden” (note 135 above), 352f., and Spamer, “Zur Überlieferung” (note 6 above), 407.

¹⁴⁹ See Friederich von der Leyen, “Über einige bisher unbekannte lateinische Fassungen von Predigten des Meisters Eckhart,” *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 38 (1906), 348–54.

century), *Meister Eckhart's symposium* is the introduction to the collection of aphorisms by Pseudo-Engelhart of Ebrach.¹⁵⁰

A poor man comes to Cologne “dâ armuot zu suochen unde der wârheit ze leben” [“in order to seek poverty there and to live for the truth”] (Pfeiffer, 625, 33–34).¹⁵¹ A virgin invites the poor man to a meal and asks him about the essence of poverty, about the poverty of the inner person, and about the poverty of the spirit. Then she changes the subject and asks whether “meister Eckehart, unser vater” (Pfeiffer, 626, 17) should not preach in public. The negative reply of the poor man sounds highly cryptic: “Wâ von? Sô ie zîtlicher, sô ie lîplicher, sô ie lîplicher, sô ie zîtlicher” [“About what? The more temporal, the more bodily; the more bodily, the more temporal”] (Pfeiffer, 626, 19–20). When the virgin demands an explanation, Meister Eckhart (who obviously is also seated at table) joins in and declares that one who does not possess the truth from within should love it from without. He then asks the virgin about the works of the Holy Spirit in the soul: how can one know these works, how does a spiritual person know whether God is present to him, and how does a person know whether all his works are done in accordance with God's will? The virgin in turn asks Meister Eckhart how a person knows that he or she is a child of God. The poor man asks Meister Eckhart how a person knows that virtue is at work in him.

Finally, Eckhart asks them how the person who teaches the truth should live, and they tell him that he should live what he teaches with words. Indeed, in his inner being he should accomplish more than what he could ever express in words.

Eckhart is not the loser in this fictitious conversation; nevertheless, he is a partner on an equal footing with two laypersons. The conversation takes place in Cologne, a center of the Beguine movement and of urban religious circles,¹⁵² and discusses central themes of Eckhart's teaching, with which the anonymous author is very familiar. Contemporaries also grasped this point: *Meister Eckhart's Symposium* was used by the Franciscan Marquard

¹⁵⁰ See Schneider (ed.), *Pseudo-Engelhart von Ebrach* (note 105 above), xv–xvii.

¹⁵¹ It is unclear what textual witnesses Pfeiffer followed in printing his text. At any rate, the framework which he gives—“Meister Eckehart sprichet, daz ûf ein zît kom ein arm mensche ze Köln an den Rîn, dâ armuot ze suochen...” [“Meister Eckhart says that once a poor man came to Cologne on the Rhine in order to seek poverty there...”] (625, 32–33)—seems secondary, and is meaningless, since Eckhart goes on to relate a story in which he himself appears in the third person.

¹⁵² If one interprets the “virgin” as a nun, it is possible that the table talk takes place in the refectory of a convent of women religious.

of Lindau for his own teaching on poverty.¹⁵³ The concluding question—how the teacher of the truth ought to live—is significant. Once again, Eckhart, whose name is mentioned only in some of the textual witnesses (usually, the Master remains anonymous),¹⁵⁴ is the representative of the intellectual tendency of the “masters of reading,” to which the lived religiosity of the “masters of life” is contrasted. In this text, the dominant tone is one of peaceful coexistence. The increasing consolidation of the “lay religion” in the big cities led to the hardening of insurmountable frontlines. *Meister Eckhart’s Symposium* already anticipates the great treatises in dialogue form between Eckhart and a lay figure.

It is in this context that we should see a text which scholars up to now have tended to overlook: a fictitious dialogue between a “great and enlightened clergyman” and Meister Eckhart, which is found among the writings attributed to Rulman Merswin, in his *Buoch von den drien durchbrüchen*.¹⁵⁵ Merswin’s literary production consists primarily in taking over mystical treatise literature, which he then shapes with his own words.¹⁵⁶ For the “three breakthroughs,” he relied first and foremost on the treatise

¹⁵³ See Georg Steer, “Der Armutsgedanke der deutschen Mystiker bei Marquard von Lindau,” *Franziskanische Studien* 60 (1978), 289–300.

¹⁵⁴ See Spamer, “Zur Überlieferung” (note 6 above), 407. Eckhart’s name is mentioned only in Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod. brev. 4° 88; Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, cgm 365; and the 1543 printed edition of Tauler. In the version in Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, cpg 418 (fol. iv–5r), we read not “meister Eckehart, unser vater,” but “der serer, vnser geistlicher vater;” in this passage, the Munich manuscripts cgm 411, 447, and 463 have only “unser geistlicher vater” or “der meister vnser geistlicher vater.” Later, the general term “der meister” or “er” [“he”] is employed.

¹⁵⁵ The *Buoch von den drien durchbrüchen* is transmitted in the *Great German Memorial* (Strasbourg, Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire, Ms. 739, Perg., 280 fols., see 111r–119r), a collection of writings which are related to the house of the Knights of St John “zum Grünen Wörth” in Strasbourg. It was written and edited after Rulman Merswin’s death by Nicholas of Louvain, a priest of the Knights of St John. Edition by Auguste Jundt, *Histoire du panthéisme populaire* (note 14 above), 215–30; see Georg Steer, “Merswin, Rulman,” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 6, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1987), 420–22, see 429.

¹⁵⁶ See the description by Nicholas of Louvain in the register of the *Memorial*: “Item das buoch von den dryen durchbrüchen, und von eime gnodenrichen gelereten pffaffen der meister Eckeharten den grossen lerer stroffete umb sine behende hohe lere die er pflag zuo tuonde vor dem gemeinen groben volke, und etteliche andere guote materie die Ruoleman Merswin selber schreip, und si ouch vermüschete mit sinen inbrunstigen hitzigen zuogeleiten minneworten” [“Further the *Book of the three breakthroughs*, and of a gifted, learned clergyman who criticized Meister Eckhart, the great teacher, because of a subtle, lofty teaching which he was accustomed to deliver in the presence of the common, uneducated people, and many other good topics which Rulman Merswin himself wrote and also intermingled with his ardent, fiery words of love which he added”] (ed. Jundt, *Histoire*, 211).

Of the Three Questions. No source is known for the dialogue between Eckhart and the gifted priest, but since the treatise *Of the Three Questions* is often transmitted together with *Meister Eckhart and the Poor Man I and II* (Pfeiffer, Spr. 66 and 67),¹⁵⁷ it is possible that Merswin may have found inspiration in these legendary narratives.

In his dialogue, which points directly to the milieu of the Friends of God, Eckhart is the defeated partner who must accept being instructed—indeed, being rebuked. The anonymous charismatic priest criticizes Eckhart because he preached theological *subtilia* in the presence of the common people.¹⁵⁸ This extremely learned preaching is not understood, or else it is useless, because it does not help those who are “beginning, growing, and perfect”—these three categories are the addressees of the treatise *Of the Three Questions*—to make progress on their way to God. The priest recommends that Eckhart replace intellectual hairsplitting with the lived following of Christ,¹⁵⁹ and lends support to this counsel by means of an autobiographical account of his own conversion, which took place completely in accordance with the pattern of the Friends of God. Eckhart hears this “general confession” with great enthusiasm, and indeed asks for permission to write it down, so that he can hand it on to interested persons. This written communication of the experience of grace also belonged to the praxis of the Friends of God. Accordingly, in this legendary narrative from the circle around Rulman Merswin, the urban lay groups of the Friends of God make Meister Eckhart one of their own.

The presupposition for the critical dealings with the figure of Meister Eckhart in all these legendary narratives is his condemnation in the trial by the Inquisition (1326–28) and the incrimination of 28 articles from his writings in the papal bull *In dominico agro*, which was promulgated

¹⁵⁷ See, e.g. the manuscripts St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 1854 (G11); Cologne, Stadtarchiv, Cod. GB 4° 32 (Kn2); Augsburg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. III 1 4° 36 (Main1); Salzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. M I 476 (S1), which transmit Aphorisms 66 and 67 with the *Traktat von den drin fragen*.

¹⁵⁸ This accusation is already made in the legend *Meister Eckhart's Symposium*. On the figure of the charismatic “master of life,” see the study by Geert Warnar, “Tauler's *minnenlich meister*. Charisma and Authority in the vernacular mystic tradition of the Low Countries and the Rhineland” (forthcoming).

¹⁵⁹ *Buoch von den drien durchbrüchen*: “Aber wie unwirdig ich sin bin und solte ich úch roten, so wolte ich úch wol user goettlicher minnen und mit der helffe goettes rotende sin, also das ir nuo anevingent und der lere unsers herren Ihesu Christi nochvolgetent also das er selber lerete die wile er in dirre zit wandelte” [“But although I am unworthy to do so, if I were to give you counsel, I would surely give you this counsel out of the divine love and with the help of God: that you now begin to follow the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he himself taught when he walked in this earthly world”] (ed. Jundt, *Histoire*, 221).

in the ecclesiastical province of Cologne and thereby reached the entire German–Dutch area. The reaction in the Netherlands was particularly sharp.¹⁶⁰

The treatise *Meister Eckhart and the Layman*, an extensive didactic dialogue between a master and a disciple,¹⁶¹ the work of an anonymous author,¹⁶² must be seen in the context of the Dutch reaction to Eckhart's trial. In this disputation, the positions are exchanged. It is not the Master (i.e. Eckhart) who is the superior authority: rather, the layman directs the conversation and endeavors to use Eckhart's doctrine to support his positions when these are open to challenge. The themes are *Abgeschiedenheit* and the love of God. However, the layman's vehement outbursts against the church and the clergy and his exaggerated self-righteousness are not given support from Eckhart's teachings. Heretical doctrines do not occur; the real scandal is the claim of the self-aware, speculating layman¹⁶³ to be able to hold a disputation about God and heavenly things.

¹⁶⁰ See Koch, "Meister Eckharts Weiterwirken" (note 8 above), 429–34; Jan van Leeuwen, Ruusbroec's pupil, writes polemically against Eckhart in his *Boexken van Meester Eckaerts leere daar hi in doelde*. In the statutes of his foundation in Deventer in 1379, Geert Groote declares that whoever teaches any of Eckhart's 28 articles is to be excluded from the community. See Robert Lerner, "New Evidence for the Condemnation of Meister Eckhart," *Speculum* 2 (April 1997), 374–66 and Lerner, "New Light on *The Mirror of Simple Souls*," *Speculum* 85, 1 (January 2010), 91–116.

¹⁶¹ See Kurt Ruh, "Eckhart und der Laie," in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 2, ed. Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1980), cols. 348–50, and Franz-Josef Schweitzer, *Meister Eckhart und der Laie. Ein antihierarchischer Dialog des 14. Jahrhunderts aus den Niederlanden* (Berlin: 1997), with a new critical edition (17–183). This dialogue is transmitted only in the Dutch linguistic area, and is found *in extenso* only in a late manuscript of the 16th century (Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Ms. 888–90). Roughly one-third of this manuscript was printed by Cornelis C.N. de Vooy, "De dialoog van Meester Eggaert en de onbekende leek," *Nederlandsch Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* NS 7 (1910), 166–226. There are also eight fragments.

¹⁶² Schweitzer dates the dialogue to around 1340 and locates its provenance in the milieu around the convent of Benedictine nuns at Rijnsburg near Leiden (which is mentioned in the dialogue). He sees its author as a priest, perhaps the nuns' chaplain. It is addressed to pious laypersons in the circle around the convent. See Schweitzer, *Meister Eckhart und der Laie*, lxi–lxv. Gert Warnar, "Meester Eckhart, Walter van Holland en Jan van Ruusbroec. Historische en literaire betrekkingen in de Middelnederlandse mystiek," *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 69 (1995), 3–25, interprets the dialogue as a purely fictitious setting; the literary context points us to a period close to the trials of Walther of Holland and Meister Eckhart in Cologne.

¹⁶³ The self-aware, speculating layperson is a contemporary figure, who can be seen in Germany in the fiction of the "Friend of God from the Oberland" and in the Dutch area in the *exemplum* story of "The young woman of twenty-one years;" see Ruh, "Eckhart und der Laie" (note 161 above), 349f.

The last of such didactic dialogues is the most problematic. Pfeiffer included it under the title *Sister Katrei* ("Daz ist swester Katrei meister Ekehartes tohter von Strâzburc") among the treatises in his edition of Eckhart.¹⁶⁴ The name of Meister Eckhart appears only in Pfeiffer's title, which is found solely in the Munich manuscript that he used. The greater part of the transmission calls the text *Of the female penitent*.¹⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the treatise belongs to the Pseudo-Eckhartiana, since it is transmitted in the basic context of authentic and Pseudo-Eckhartian texts. Besides this, Henry Suso used the treatise for his *Exemplar*,¹⁶⁶ and in the Latin revision of the text by the Benedictine Oswald of Anhausen (which survives only in a translation back into German), it is unambiguously ascribed to Meister Eckhart.¹⁶⁷ Schweitzer locates it in the context of legendary dialogues between laypersons (represented by women) and priests, and the literature of the Friends of God. He identifies the historical background as the

¹⁶⁴ See Franz-Josef Schweitzer, "Schwester Katrei," in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon* 8, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1992), 947–50; edited by Pfeiffer, ed. *Meister Eckhart* (note 9 above), Treatise VI: "Daz ist swester Katrei meister Ekehartes tohter von Strâzburc" (448–75); this is only the short version. Critical new edition: Schweitzer, *Der Freiheitsbegriff der deutschen Mystik* (note 147 above), 304–455. English translation: Elvira Borgstadt, "The Sister Catherine's Treatise," in *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, ed. Bernard McGinn (New York: 1986), 349–87.

¹⁶⁵ Pfeiffer based his edition on the manuscript Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 133, Perg., 14th century. The text is transmitted in 17 Middle High German, Middle Low German, and Middle Dutch manuscripts, nine of which are in the Alemannic dialect. Around the middle of the 14th century, the treatise was translated into Latin by the Benedictine Oswald of Anhausen (the translator of the *Schwabenspiegel*); this survives only in a translation back into Middle High German. See Schweitzer, "Schwester Katrei," 948, and Schweitzer, *Der Freiheitsbegriff der deutschen Mystik* (note 147 above), 194f. Schweitzer distinguishes three "classes" in the transmission: a longer dialogue version without additional text; a longer and a shorter version with additional text; revisions.

¹⁶⁶ Denifle pointed out four sentences which Suso could have taken over only from *Sister Katrei*: Pfeiffer, 464, 16f. and 20; Pfeiffer, 464, 39; Pfeiffer, 465, 2f.; and Pfeiffer, 468, 26–29. Suso compiled his *Exemplar* in 1362/63, which is the *terminus ante quem* for *Sister Katrei*; see Schweitzer, *Der Freiheitsbegriff der deutschen Mystik* (note 147 above), 162.

¹⁶⁷ "Anno domini M^o CCC^o X^o plüet an dem Reyn ein gutter vnd namhafter doctor prediger ordens mit dem namen Eckardus, der in den sibem freyen künsten vnd in der heiligen götlichen kunst ein parysischer licencziat waz vnd imm meister stul gesetzt zu predigen. Der hat ein püchlein von der vngelernten leyen wegen in dewtsch zu sammen gesetzt, daz sagt von einem bescheyden peichter, daz er selber oder ein ander mag sein, vnd von einer bewerten tochter dez seber psychtigers; vnd daz tut er in der weiß dyalogi..." ["In the year 1310, an able and celebrated doctor from the Order of Preachers named Eckhart worked in the Rhineland. He had acquired the *venia legendi* in the seven liberal arts and in sacred theology in Paris and was the professor of homiletics. He wrote a little book in German because of the uneducated laity, which speaks about a prudent father confessor, who may be himself or someone else, and of a tried and trusty female penitent of the same father confessor, and he makes use of the dialogue form..."]; see Schweitzer, *Der Freiheitsbegriff der deutschen Mystik*, 196.

persecutions of the Beguines in Strasbourg in 1317–19. But the interpretation of *Sister Katrei* as “clearly the only surviving large-scale original testimony to the Free Spirit movement of Beguines and Beguards” certainly goes too far.¹⁶⁸

As so often in this textual genre, the textual form is “fluid” (i.e. the treatise is made up of a stable core and additions which fluctuate in the course of the textual history).¹⁶⁹ The core consists of four confessional dialogues between a priest who belongs to a religious order and his female penitent, but it is only at the beginning that we hear of guilt and of the wish for absolution in the traditional ecclesiastical framework, since the concern of this purely fictitious dialogue is rather the request made by the female penitent to know the “quickest” (*nechsten*) path to blessedness and perfection. She herself takes this path in an exemplary manner, beginning with an interior purification and progressing via the following of Christ and the *willige armuot* of the itinerant Beguines, until she arrives at the *unio mystica* that culminates in the words: “Herre, fröwent üch mitt mir, ich bin gott worden” [“Sir, rejoice with me, I have become God”] (ed. Schweitzer, 334, 13–14). The reaction of the priest clearly belongs to the movement of the Free Spirit: he counsels the penitent, who is now on the height of perfection, to make known this perfection to others through the external enjoyment of all things.

After the penitent has attained this highest level thanks to divine grace and has been confirmed in it, she instructs the priest in the terminology of Meister Eckhart, with recourse to his teaching about the soul and the intellect. She draws a sharp demarcation line between the level of knowledge which she has attained and a visionary form of mystical knowledge.

¹⁶⁸ “The anonymous author should be seen as belonging to, or as close to, the strictly ascetic Beguard movement of the *willige armuot*, which tended in part towards heresy, and is . . . mentioned in the 1317 letter of the bishop of Strasbourg;” see Schweitzer, “‘Schwester Katrei’” (note 164 above), 947 and 949. On this, see Bernard McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany* (New York: 2005), 343–49: contemporary scholarship has largely excluded the hypothesis that the treatise is a product of the Free Spirit, and only Schweitzer continues to pursue this line of argument: “but I find it difficult to think of the dialogue as essentially a Free Spirit text, as the following analysis will attempt to show” (344). McGinn sees *Sister Katrei* as a testimony to the innumerable variants of mystical viewpoints in the 14th century, all of which revolve around the definition of mystical authority.

¹⁶⁹ In the course of the history of its transmission, the core treatise grows into a textual conglomerate with further mystical-ascetical texts. Insertions include the *Book of the Five Loaves and Two Fishes* (a mystical manual for sacramental confession); *Sant Paulus sprichet . . . Of the Fivefold Mystical Dying*, aphorisms (*Bishop Albrecht*), and sermons (Pfeiffer, n. 37); see Schweitzer, “‘Schwester Katrei’” (note 164 above), 948.

Once again, the modern, self-aware layperson is discussing with a representative of the ancient orders and of the institutional church. In this case, the role of the institutional church and of its sacraments is not fundamentally called into question, but when it is a matter of coming into direct contact with God, the illuminated layperson who has received God's grace (the modern trend) surpasses the clergyman with his academic training.

MEISTER ECKHART'S INFLUENCE ON NICHOLAS OF CUSA: A SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE

Elizabeth Brient

Soon after Franz Pfeiffer published his edition of Eckhart's German sermons and treatises in 1857, scholars became interested in exploring the relationship between Meister Eckhart (1327) and Nicholas of Cusa (1401–64).¹ An obvious, and frequently referenced, point of departure has been the interpretation of what Cusanus has to say about Meister Eckhart in his *Apologia doctae ignorantiae* (*Defense of Learned Ignorance*).² Cusanus

¹ There have been two important surveys of the literature on the relationship between Meister Eckhart and Nicholas of Cusa. The first was produced by Herbert Wackerzapp in *Der Einfluss Meister Eckharts auf die ersten philosophischen Schriften des Nikolaus von Kues, 1440–1450* (Münster: 1962), 1–7, hereafter cited as Wackerzapp. The second was compiled by Stefanie Frost in her recent study, *Nikolaus von Kues und Meister Eckhart: Rezeption im Spiegel der Marginalien zum Opus Tripartitum Meister Eckharts* (Münster: 2006), 1–13, hereafter cited as Frost. I will include summaries here of their discussions for the English reader. I have focused here on literature that takes the Eckhart–Cusanus relationship as a main theme. There have been a number of more general works, however, that include helpful discussions of the relationship between the two thinkers, including: Werner Beierwaltes, *Identität und Differenz. Zum Prinzip cusanischen Denkens* (Rheinisch-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften), Vorträge G 220 (Oplanden: 1977); Werner Beierwaltes, *Denken des Einen. Studien zur neuplatonischen Philosophie und ihrer Wirkungsgeschichte* (Frankfurt: 1985); Ingeborg Degenhardt, *Studien zum Wandel des Eckhartbildes* (Leiden: 1967), 50–68; Kurt Flasch, *Nicholas von Kues. Geschichte einer Entwicklung* (Frankfurt: 1998); Alois M. Haas, “Nikolaus von Kues als mystischer Theologe,” in *Mystik im Kontext*, ed. Alois M. Haas (Munich: 2004), 262–78; Rudolf Haubst, *Die Christologie des Nikolaus von Kues* (Freiburg im Breisgau: 1956), 30–38; Karl-Hermann Kandler, *Nikolaus von Kues. Denker zwischen Mittelalter und Neuzeit* (Göttingen: 1995); Josef Koch, *Meister Eckharts Weiterwirken im deutsch-niederländischen Raum*, Kleine Schriften 1, (Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura) 127 (Rome: 1973); Johann Kreuzer, *Gestalten mittelalterlicher Philosophie: Augustinus, Eriugena, Eckhart, Tauler, Nikolaus von Kues* (Munich: 2000), 169–205; Vladimir Lossky, *Théologie Négative et Connaissance de Dieu chez Maître Eckhart* (Paris: 1998); Burkhart Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart. Analogie, Univoxität und Einheit* (Hamburg: 1983), 92–95; Norbert Winkler, *Nikolaus von Kues zur Einführung* (Hamburg: 2001), 187–99. See also the book by Stephan Grotz, *Negationen des Absoluten: Meister Eckhart, Cusanus, Hegel* (Hamburg: 2009).

² Nicholas of Cusa, *Apologia doctae ignorantiae*, ed. and trans. Jasper Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa's Debate with John Wenck* (Minneapolis: 1981). *Apologia doctae ignorantiae*, vol. 2 of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera omnia iussu et auctoritate Academiae litterarum Heidelbergensis ad codicum fidem edita* (Leipzig-Hamburg: 1932ff.). The individual volumes will be indicated with “h” in what follows.

wrote his *Apologia* around 1449³ in response to a 1442–43 polemic Johannes Wenck wrote, entitled *De ignota litteratura* (*On Unknown Learning*)⁴ in which the Heidelberg theologian attacked Cusanus's early major work, *De docta ignorantia* (*On Learned Ignorance*) (1440). Wenck criticizes Cusanus for presenting unorthodox views of God, the creation, and Christ, and places Cusanus in the tradition of the condemned Beguines, Beghards, and Meister Eckhart. In particular, Wenck accuses Cusanus and Eckhart of pantheism and of confusing Christ with human nature in general.

Wenck begins by misstating Cusanus's principle that, "All things coincide *in* God," as "All things coincide *with* God." He then goes on to say that, "This thesis is alluded to by Meister Eckhart."⁵ Wenck then cites two passages from Eckhart that seem to assert the identity of the human soul with God. The first is taken from the *Book of Divine Consolation* and describes the man who "becomes empty" of creaturely images, and the second is taken from German Sermon 2, "*Iesus intravit in quoddam castellum*," where Eckhart describes the "citadel" or "spark" in the soul.⁶ Wenck goes on to tie these teachings of Eckhart to the condemned Beghards and Beguines, who "were claiming (1) that God is, formally, whatever is and (2) that they were God—not being distinct [from Him] in nature."⁷ Wenck then attempts to paint Cusanus as a pantheist in the same vein by referring to his assertion in *De docta ignorantia* that "Absolute Maximality is Absolute Being, in whose absence there cannot be anything"⁸ before immediately stating that "Eckhart, in his work on Genesis and Exodus, alludes to this [same point]."⁹ Wenck then goes on to cite two more passages from Eckhart: one, which asserted that "God is Being," and another that insisted on the eternity of creation.¹⁰ Finally, Wenck accuses Cusanus of holding that all things are one and essentially divine, an error, he claims, that arises

³ On the long delay between Wenck's attack and Cusanus's response, and the debate in the literature as to its cause, see Frost, 176–78.

⁴ Johannes Wenck, *De ignota litteratura*, ed. and trans. Jasper Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa's Debate with John Wenck* (Minneapolis: 1981). See Rudolf Haubst, *Studien zu Nikolaus von Kues und Johannes Wenck*, (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters) 38, 1 (Münster: 1955), 95–136.

⁵ Wenck, *De ignota litteratura*, 24; Hopkins, *Debate*, 25–26.

⁶ Wenck, *De ignota litteratura*, 24–25; Hopkins, *Debate*, 26. The passages he cites from the *Liber benedictus* and German Sermon 2: "*Iesus intravit in quoddam castellum*" correspond to article numbers 10 and 69 from *Proc. Col. I*. See Frost, 180.

⁷ Wenck, *De ignota litteratura*, 25; Hopkins, *Debate*, 26.

⁸ Nicholas of Cusa, *De docta ignorantia*, 1, 2, 6; 1, 6, 15.

⁹ Wenck, *De ignota litteratura*, 26; Hopkins, *Debate*, 27.

¹⁰ The passages he cites are from the *Prologus generalis*, n.12 and *Expositio libri Genesis*, n. 7. They correspond to article numbers 36, 43 from *Proc. Col. I*. See Frost, 180.

from the failure to distinguish between image and exemplar. Wenck then cites Eckhart's teaching of the birth of the Word in the soul from German Sermon 6: "The Father begets His Son in me," and "I am there that same Son, not another Son."¹¹ It is clear that Wenck did not read Eckhart's texts directly but took all of his quotations from the list of suspected propositions extracted from Eckhart's works for his first Cologne trial.¹²

Cusanus responds by calling Wenck a falsifier (*falsarius*) who has misread and misunderstood both *De docta ignorantia* and Eckhart. Cusanus makes it clear that unlike Wenck he has read extensively in Eckhart's actual writings, and he states unequivocally that he "had never read that Eckhart taught the creation to be the creator."¹³ In describing the sources of his familiarity with Eckhart, Cusanus writes that

here and there in [various] libraries he had seen (1) Eckhart's many expository works on very many books of the Bible, (2) many sermons, and (3) many disputations. Furthermore, he had read many articles extracted from Eckhart's writings on John—[articles which were] criticized and rejected by others. And he had seen at Mainz, at the home of the teacher John Guldenschaf, the short writing of Eckhart's in which he replies to those who had attempted to reproach him, and in which he sets forth his own views and shows that the critics have not understood him.¹⁴

¹¹ Wenck, *De ignota litteratura*, 30; Hopkins, *Debate*, 31. The passage he cites is taken from Eckhart's German Sermon 6: "*Iusti vivent in aeternum*."

¹² See Frost, 180.

¹³ Nicholas of Cusa, *Apologia*, 25; Hopkins, *Debate*, 59.

¹⁴ Nicholas of Cusa, *Apologia*, 25; Hopkins, *Debate*, 58–59. It is striking that Cusanus does not mention his own Eckhart manuscript in this account, Codex Cusanus 21, which he had acquired four years earlier, and which he certainly must have used in composing the *Apologia*. It should also be noted that Cusanus clearly had access to a list of suspected articles drawn from the *Commentary on John* and used at Eckhart's trial, which has not been handed down to us. See Frost, 27. There is some disagreement in the literature as to how to interpret Cusanus's reference to the "short writing" he saw at the home of John Guldenschaf, in which Eckhart responds to his critics. Duclow, for instance, takes it as a reference to Eckhart's well-known *Verteidigungsschrift* (*Defense*) from 26 September 1326, which remains an important document for interpreting Eckhart's trial and condemnation. See Donald Duclow, "Nicholas of Cusa in the Margins of Meister Eckhart: Codex Cusanus 21," in *Nicholas of Cusa in Search of God and Wisdom*, ed. Gerald Christianson and Thomas M. Izbicki (Leiden: 1991), 58. See also Gabriel Théry, "Édition critique des pièces relatives au procès d'Eckhart contenues dans le manuscrit 33b de la bibliothèque de Soest," *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge* 1 (1926/27), 129–268; and Bernard McGinn, "Eckhart's Condemnation Reconsidered," *The Thomist* 44 (1980), 390–414. Geog Steer, however, follows Degenhardt in interpreting it as a defense of the articles drawn from the *Commentary on John*. If that is the case, there was another *Verteidigungsschrift* that has not been handed down to us, but which Cusanus had access to. See Georg Steer, "Die Predigten des Cusanus im Vergleich mit dem Predigtwerk von Meister Eckhart," in *Die Sermones des*

Cusanus not only defends himself from Wenck's accusations of pantheism, he goes on to defend Eckhart from these charges as well. In fact, Cusanus makes extensive use of Eckhart's prologue to the *Opus propositionum* in conducting both his own and Eckhart's defense, though he does not name his source.¹⁵ Cusanus explicitly praises Eckhart's "genius and ardor," but goes on to express the "wish" that Eckhart's books "be removed from public places; for the people are not suited for [the statements] which Eckhart often intersperses, contrary to the custom of the other teachers; nevertheless, intelligent men find in them many subtle and useful [points]."¹⁶ One cannot help but see here a none-too-subtle dig at Wenck himself.

On the basis of Cusanus's defense of Eckhart in his *Apologia* and Cusanus's references there to his exposure to the works of Eckhart in various libraries, Josef Bach¹⁷ named Cusanus as Eckhart's most significant student. Bach's early study restricted its discussion to the ideas presented in the *De docta ignorantia* and Cusanus's German interpretation of the Lord's Prayer (*Predigt XVIII*), and his analysis of Cusanus's reception of Eckhart remained a general discussion of their treatment of the relationship between God and creation, unity and difference.

In 1880 Heinrich Denifle found the first Latin Eckhart manuscript in Erfurt (Codex Amplonianus 181), which opened up major new directions for Eckhart scholarship. Eckhart was now recognized not only as an extraordinary preacher in the vernacular, but also as a highly trained philosopher and theologian, a master of the schools familiar with scholastic methods and debates. Denifle's discovery, of course, also opened up the possibility for a more substantive, textual investigation of the relationship between Eckhart and Cusanus. Denifle, for example, was able to show that in his *Apologia* Cusanus was in fact using ideas of Eckhart's,

Nikolaus von Kues, ed. Klaus Kremer, *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 30 (Trier: 2005), 155; and Degenhardt, *Eckhartbild*, 55.

¹⁵ Nicholas of Cusa, *Apologia*, 25–26; Hopkins, *Debate*, 59–60. Indeed the entire defense is practically an excerpt from *Prologus in opus propositionum*, nn. 15–23. Cusanus gives a quotation from Augustine taken from the *Prologus in opus propositionum* n. 20 and then uses the example of fire, to which, in Codex Cusanus 21, he had written the following marginal note: "*Nota forma ignis non dat esse sed hoc esse.*" (Frost points out that we can conclude that the notes in Codex Cusanus 21 were not made with an eye towards the *Apologia*, because the other Eckhart passages he uses are unmarked.) The defense of Eckhart is analogous. Cusanus first defends Eckhart in general and then uses *Prologus in opus propositionum*, n. 15f. Frost highlights the fact that, in doing so, Cusanus expresses the Incarnation more clearly than Eckhart had. See Frost, 180–81.

¹⁶ Nicholas of Cusa, *Apologia*, 25; Hopkins, *Debate*, 59.

¹⁷ Josef Bach, *Meister Eckhart, der Vater der deutschen Spekulation* (Vienna: 1864), 209–25.

which he had drawn from the preface to Eckhart's *Opus propositionum*, in order to reply to Wenck's charges of pantheism. Specifically, he showed that Cusanus uses three examples drawn from Eckhart's preface in order to clarify the relationship between God and creation: Form-Matter, Part-Whole, Person-Humanity of Christ.¹⁸

In 1886 Denifle made another major discovery. He found a manuscript of Eckhart's Latin works and sermons (Codex Cusanus 21) in Cusanus's personal library in Kues, complete with copious marginalia in Cusanus's own hand testifying to his intense study of the text. The manuscript was commissioned by Cusanus and dates to 1444. It is still the most important, and most complete, of the four major Latin Eckhart manuscripts and contains nearly all of Eckhart's surviving Latin works.¹⁹ It includes the prologues to the *Opus tripartitum*, both the literal and the parabolic commentaries on Genesis, the commentaries on Exodus, Wisdom, and the Gospel of John, brief sermons and *lectiones* on Ecclesiasticus, a short treatise on the Lord's Prayer, and an extensive collection of Eckhart's Latin Sermons. In the midst of the manuscript is a list of the 17 condemned and 11 suspect articles from Eckhart's condemnation, *In agro dominico*.²⁰ Thus we have Nicholas of Cusa, first and foremost, to thank for our knowledge of Eckhart's Latin works today. The marginalia consist of textual corrections, marginal markings, and comments, and have been deemed important enough by Koch and his colleagues to include in the apparatus to the critical edition of Eckhart's Latin works. The marginal markings include vertical lines alongside a column of text and occasionally a sketched hand with the index finger pointing to a passage. The written comments include numerous instances of *nota* or *exemplum*, and transcriptions of phrases or sentences drawn from Eckhart's

¹⁸ Heinrich S. Denifle, "Meister Eckeharts lateinische Schriften und die Grundanschauung seiner Lehre," *Archiv für Literatur- und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters* 2 (Berlin: 1886), 417, n. 3, 502–04, 432 n. 3. See Wackerzapp, 1.

¹⁹ The Latin works not included are *Collatio in libros Sententiarum*, LW V, 37–83, the *Sermo die b. Augustini Parisius habitus*, LW V, 89–99, the *Sermo Paschalis*, LW V, 136–48 and the *Pariser Quaestiones*, LW V, 17–26. [*Meister Eckhart. Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, herausgegeben im Auftrag der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft. Die deutschen Werke, ed. Josef Quint and Georg Steer (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1936ff.) (abbrev. DW). Die lateinischen Werke, ed. Josef Koch et al. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1936ff.) (abbrev. LW)] Frost holds that Cusanus would have known these Latin works as well, even though they were not contained in his manuscript. In his *Apologia* (h II, 25, 2), for example, he talks about his familiarity with *disputata multa*, which she takes as a reference to just these texts. See Frost, 24, n. 124.

²⁰ Duclow, "Margins," 59–60. See Frost, 21–24. Interestingly, in this list of articles, those that were taken from the *Commentary on John* are marked. See Frost, 27 and 87.

text itself. Cusanus's comments sometimes announce the principle theme of a text and others relate to issues of speculative interest to Cusanus.²¹ With the exception of a passage concerning the eternity of creation in Eckhart's *Commentary on John*,²² Cusanus does not mark the passages in his Eckhart manuscript from which the articles in Eckhart's condemnation were extracted. On two occasions Cusanus praises Eckhart's "genius" when he clarifies difficult biblical passages by rearranging the words, or by replacing a word with an equivalent. In this practice Cusanus writes that "this master is exceptional in all his writings."²³

The discovery of Codex Cusanus 21 naturally inspired a new interest in the relationship between Eckhart and Cusanus. Denifle, for example, was able to show the influence of Eckhart's *Commentary on John* (not included in the Erfurt manuscript) on Cusanus's 1456 sermon *Ubi est qui natus est rex Iudaeorum?* In this sermon Cusanus makes extensive and detailed use of Eckhart's commentary on John 1:38 (*Ubi habitas?*).²⁴ Throughout his sermon, Cusanus directly quotes from and paraphrases Eckhart's discussion, and he devotes a sizeable piece of the sermon to a defense of Eckhart's views on the eternity of creation, views which had been condemned in the papal bull *In agro dominico*.²⁵ Denifle focuses his examination, in particular, on Eckhart's and Cusanus's respective discussions of the eternity of the world. Drawing on Denifle's work, Paulo Rotta,²⁶ Edmond

²¹ See Duclow, "Margins," 61.

²² *In Joh.*, n. 216, LW III, 181, 7f.: "Concedi potest quod mundus fuit ab aeterno, et iterum quod deus ipsum prius creare non potuit. Creavit enim mundum in primo nunc aeternitatis, quo ipse deus et est et deus est." See Frost, 87. The passage is marked with "*cave*" (beware), and Frost notes that it is not entirely clear that the "*cave*" is in Cusanus's own hand. It is unclear for whom and for what purpose this passage was marked, as it is the only article from the bull that is noted in any way in the marginalia of the Eckhartian texts of Codex Cusanus 21.

²³ Duclow notes, for example, that in Sermon II, 2, "where Eckhart changes *deus* to *esse*, Nicholas writes *nota ingenium scriptoris*," and in Sermon XXIII "where Eckhart alters *spiritus sanctus* to *veritas*, Cusanus's note repeats his justification for the change, 'alternatio dictionum multa obscura declarat,' and adds, 'et in hoc iste magister est in omnibus scriptis suis singularis.'" See Duclow, "Margins," 61, n. 15. See also Frost, 172.

²⁴ *Expositio sancti Evangelii secundum Johannem*, nn. 199–222 (LW III, 168–86).

²⁵ The first three of the condemned articles are expressions of Eckhart's teaching on the eternity of creation. The first and third are drawn from Eckhart's *Commentary on Genesis* (n. 7) and the second from his *Commentary on John* (n. 216).

²⁶ Paulo Rotta, *Il pensiero di Nicolò da Cusa nei suoi rapporti storici* (Turin: 1911), 250–55. Paulo Rotta, *Il Cardinale Nicolò da Cusa* (Milan: 1928), 271ff.

Vansteenberghe,²⁷ J. Lenz,²⁸ J. Ranft,²⁹ Joachim Ritter,³⁰ and G. della Volpe³¹ discussed the relationship between Eckhart and Cusanus. Most importantly, Vansteenberghe drew attention to the influence of Eckhart on Cusanus's sermon *Verbum caro factum est*.³² In the wake of Denifle's discovery of Cusanus's Eckhart manuscript, scholars began to put forward competing interpretations of the significance of Cusanus's marginalia. Martin Grabmann saw in them a critical distancing from Eckhart's ideas. He pointed in particular to the note, "*cave*" (beware), in the context of Eckhart's discussion of the eternity of the world in his *Commentary on John*.³³ He also interpreted the density of marginalia in Eckhart's Latin sermon *Deus unus est*³⁴ as an indication that Eckhart represents views not in line with standard scholastic, and specifically Thomistic, teachings.³⁵ O. Karrer³⁶ rejected this interpretation of Cusanus as a critic of Eckhart. Karrer argued, rather, that Cusanus used Eckhart's writings as source material for his own work. He interpreted the *cave* as a simple reminder that the passage in question was condemned and should not be taken literally.

²⁷ Edmund Vansteenberghe, *Le Cardinal Nicolas de Cues* (Paris: 1920), 426–29.

²⁸ J. Lenz, *Die docta ignorantia oder die mystische Gotteserkenntnis des Nikolaus Cusanus in ihren philosophischen Grundlagen* (Würzburg: 1923), 118.

²⁹ J. Ranft, *Schöpfer und Geschöpf nach Kardinal Nikolaus von Cusa* (Würzburg: 1924), 146–48.

³⁰ Joachim Ritter, "Die Stellung des Nicolaus von Cues in der Philosophiegeschichte. Grundsätzliche Probleme der neueren Cusanus-Forschung," *Blätter für deutsche Philosophie* 13 (1939/40), 111–55, see 133ff.

³¹ G. della Volpe, *Il misticismo speculativo di Maestro Eckhart nei suoi rapporti storici* (Bologna: 1930); G. della Volpe, *Eckhart o della filosofia mistica* (Rome: 1952), 246–48. Wackerzapp notes that della Volpe makes a helpful reference to Cusanus's 1457 Sermon CCLXXXII, 247, n. 18. See Wackerzapp, 5.

³² See Wackerzapp's discussion, 4–5. There are actually two sermon sketches on the theme, *Verbum caro factum est*, both of which name Eckhart explicitly and make use of Eckhart's *Commentary on John*. The first sermon, *Verbum caro factum est*, from 27 December 1453 uses *In Joh.*, n. 2, 4–7, LW III, 4, 6–8. The second sermon, *Verbum caro factum est*, from 1 January 1454 uses *In Joh.*, n. 107, LW III, 91–93. See Frost, 79, 187, and 190.

³³ Martin Grabmann, "Neue Eckhartforschungen im Lichte neuer Eckhartfunde. Bemerkungen zu O. Karrers und G. Thérys O.P. Eckhartarbeiten," *Divus Thomas* 5 (Fribourg: 1927), 83. Cited in Wackerzapp, 5. This was a proposition that had been condemned in the papal bull *In argo dominico*. See above, note 22.

³⁴ *Sermo XXIX*, LW IV, 263–70.

³⁵ Martin Grabmann, *Neuaufgefundene Pariser Quaestiones Meister Eckharts und ihre Stellung in seinem geistigen Entwicklungsgange* (Munich: 1927), 81. Cited in Wackerzapp, 5.

³⁶ O. Karrer, "Zu Prälat M. Grabmanns Eckehartkritik," *Divus Thomas* 5 (Fribourg: 1927), 208–10.

With the beginning of the publication of critical editions of the works of both Nicholas of Cusa in 1932³⁷ and Eckhart in 1936³⁸ came the growing opportunity for a careful, textual comparison of the two thinkers. In 1937 Josef Koch, the general editor of the Eckhart edition, published and commented on *Vier Predigten im Geiste Eckharts* (*Four Sermons in the Spirit of Eckhart*), a collection of four of Cusanus's sermons composed in the years 1453–57, which make explicit use of Eckhart's work.³⁹ All four stem from Cusanus's Brixen period and, along with Cusanus's *Apologia*, are the only texts in which Cusanus mentions Eckhart by name. All four also make use of Eckhart's *Commentary on John*.⁴⁰ The first two were sketches for sermons given in Brixen on 27 December 1453 and 1 January 1454, which have as their theme the Incarnation according to the prologue of the Gospel of John: *Verbum caro factum est*.⁴¹ The third is the sermon *Ubi est qui natus est Rex Iudaeorum?*,⁴² given on 6 January 1456 in Brixen, and the fourth is the sermon *Loquimini ad petram*,⁴³ given on 25 March 1457 in Brixen. It was Koch's thesis at that time that Cusanus was not familiar with Eckhart's work until 1444, the year he acquired his copy of Eckhart's Latin works (Codex Cusanus 21), four years after the completion of Cusanus's early major work, *De docta ignorantia*, in 1440. He saw evidence for this position in the fact that Cusanus interprets and defends Eckhartian ideas in these four sermons by way of "translating" Eckhart's thoughts into the language of *De docta ignorantia*. Koch reasoned that, since Cusanus felt

³⁷ *Nicolai de Cusa Opera omnia iussu et auctoritate Academiae litterarum Heidelbergensis ad codicum fidem edita* (Leipzig-Hamburg: 1932ff.) (abbrev. h).

³⁸ *Meister Eckhart. Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, herausgegeben im Auftrag der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft. Die deutschen Werke, ed. Josef Quint and Georg Steer (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1936ff.) (abbrev. DW). Die lateinischen Werke, ed. Josef Koch et al. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1936ff.) (abbrev. LW).

³⁹ *Vier Predigten im Geiste Eckharts*, ed. Josef Koch, vol. 1, 2–5 of *Cusanus-Texte Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Heidelberg: 1937) (abbrev. CT). Rudolf Haubst, in his work on Cusanus as a theologian, also made helpful connections to Eckhart in his analysis of Cusanus's later sermons. See especially *Das Bild des Einen und Dreieinen Gottes in der Welt nach Nikolaus von Kues* (Trier: 1952); *Die Christologie des Nikolaus von Kues* (Freiburg im Breisgau: 1956).

⁴⁰ The first *Verbum caro factum est* uses *In Joh.*, n. 2, 4–7 (LW III, 4, 6–8). The second *Verbum caro factum est* uses *In Joh.*, n. 107 (LW III, 91–93). *Ubi est qui natus est Rex Iudaeorum?* uses *In Joh.*, n. 199–222 (LW III, 168–86). *Loquimini ad petram* uses *In Joh.*, n. 370–407 (LW III, 315–46). See Frost, 79, 187, 190, 196–97, and 210.

⁴¹ The first *Verbum caro factum est* from 27 December 1453 is *Sermo CXL*, h XVIII, Fasc. 1, 90f; CT I, 2–5, 72–75. Eckhart is named at h XVIII, 91 n. 3, 10f. The second *Verbum caro factum est* from 1 January 1454 is *Sermo CXLI*, h XVIII, Fasc. 2, 93–97; CT I, 2–5, 74–83. Eckhart is named at h XVIII, 94, n. 3, 19.

⁴² *Sermo CCXVI*; h XIX, Fasc. 1, 82–96; CT I, 2–5, 84–117.

⁴³ *Sermo CCLXXIV*, h XIX, 521–34; CT I, 2–5, 118–57.

the need to translate Eckhart's thoughts in these sermons into his own conceptual language, this implied that *De docta ignorantia* was not itself written under the influence of Eckhart. This is a view, however, which Koch later revised when he realized that Cusanus was already quoting directly from Eckhart's *Commentary on Exodus* in *De docta ignorantia*.⁴⁴

Soon afterwards, Koch's doctoral student, Herbert Wackerzapp, undertook an extensive study of Eckhart's influence on the early writings of Nicholas of Cusa from 1440–50, *Der Einfluß Meister Eckharts auf die ersten philosophischen Schriften des Nikolaus von Kues (1440–1450)*.⁴⁵ Wackerzapp was able to show conclusively, through a careful textual and systematic comparison, that Cusanus was already well acquainted with Eckhart before 1444. He not only knew and used the Exodus commentary for his own work, but also the prologues to the *Opus tripartitum*, the first Genesis exposition, the commentaries on Wisdom and John, and a number of the Latin sermons.⁴⁶ Thus, Wackerzapp was able to show that Cusanus must have had access to manuscripts of Eckhart's Latin works before *De docta ignorantia*, access that must have inspired his own plans to have the manuscripts copied and which presumably the scribe used in producing Codex Cusanus 21.⁴⁷ Wackerzapp divided his text into a thematic study, which examined, in turn, the equation of the transcendentals (*esse, unitas, veritas*) with God, the relationship between unity and intellect, the problem of Being, the relationship between unity and plurality, eternity

⁴⁴ Josef Koch, *Die Ars coniecturalis des Nikolaus von Kues* (Cologne-Opladen: 1956), 16, n. 22. While working on the critical edition of Eckhart's *Commentary on Exodus*, Koch recognized that in *De docta ignorantia* I. 16 Cusanus cited Maimonides word for word from Eckhart's *Commentary on Exodus*. See Wackerzapp, 7–8.

⁴⁵ Herbert Wackerzapp, *Der Einfluß Meister Eckharts auf die ersten philosophischen Schriften des Nikolaus von Kues (1440–1450)*, ed. Josef Koch, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters 39, 3 (Münster: 1962). See also Josef Koch, "Nikolaus von Kues und Meister Eckhart," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 4 (1964), 164–73.

⁴⁶ Wackerzapp singles out in particular: Sermons II 2, V 1, VI 1, VI 3, X, XXIII, XXIX, XXXIV 2, XLV, and XLIX 2. See Wackerzapp, 173.

⁴⁷ Wackerzapp, 9. Wackerzapp was not able to discover any influence of Eckhart on the writings of Cusanus's Basel period. In particular, he did not find any influence on Cusanus's *De concordantia catholica*. However, he thought he was able to identify Eckhart's influence on Cusanus's Sermon "*Hoc facite in meam commemorationem*," which Koch had dated to 1432, but which Wackerzapp, with Vansteenbergh, dated to early 1439. See Wackerzapp, 10–12. Rudolf Haubst, however, disputed this claim. See Rudolf Haubst, "Nikolaus von Kues als Interpret und Verteidiger Meister Eckhart," in *Freiheit und Gelassenheit. Meister Eckhart Heute*, ed. Udo Kern (Mainz: 1980), 75–96; see 77. Haubst argues that Cusanus would have been able to find the mirror analogy and the stork analogy, which were supposed to be evidence of the connection of this sermon to Eckhart's German writings, more clearly in Cusanus's other known sources.

and time, and God and creation. In his concluding summary Wackerzapp noted that:

Nicholas was particularly interested in the conceptually dense parts of Eckhart's scriptural commentary. Next to the prologues, which in contrast to Eckhart's generally aphoristic style show the beginning of a systematic exposition, it is the beginning of the first exposition on Genesis, which contains the proper metaphysics of the teaching on creation [that are of interest]. In the commentary on Wisdom it is discussions of the problem of the one and the many (nn. 35–40) and of Divine Unity (nn. 144–155). The passages taken from the commentary on John show that Nicholas was already interested, early on, in Eckhart's explanation of John 1:38: "*ubi habitas?*" (nn. 199–222), which was later the occasion and the stimulus for Cusanus's Sermon CCXIII "*Ubi est qui natus est rex Iudaeorum?*" (1456). Of all of Eckhart's Latin sermons, Sermon XXIX "*Deus unus est*" had particular significance.⁴⁸

Wackerzapp also concluded that no compelling evidence was found to show that Cusanus had used any of Eckhart's German writings in his own work.⁴⁹

Shortly after the publication of Wackerzapp's study, Josef Koch contributed a short piece that investigated the possible influence of Meister Eckhart on Cusanus's second major work, *De coniecturis* (*On Conjecture*), and in particular, on Cusanus's theory of the four unities and on his theory of participation.⁵⁰ Cusanus's theory of the four unities⁵¹ is grounded in the general principle, "*divisa inferius sunt unum superius*"—that what is different and divided in the lower unity is one in the corresponding higher unity. Koch argues that Eckhart is the source for the principle, which Eckhart utilized in at least a dozen places.⁵² Though at first Eckhart seems a likely source for Cusanus's theory of participation as well, Koch concludes that in this case it is more probable that Cusanus is influenced by multiple authors. Koch points to strikingly similar passages in William of Auvergne, Thierry of Chartres, and John Scottus Eriugena, all among Cusanus's sources.⁵³

⁴⁸ Wackerzapp, 173.

⁴⁹ Wackerzapp, 171.

⁵⁰ Josef Koch, "Nikolaus von Kues und Meister Eckhart. Randbemerkungen zu zwei in der Schrift *De coniecturis* gegebenen Problemen," *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 4 (1964), 164–73.

⁵¹ The four unities are: (1) Absolute Unity or God; (2) intellectual unity or Intellect; (3) rational unity or the soul; (4) sensible unity or the body.

⁵² Koch, "Nikolaus von Kues und Meister Eckhart," 167.

⁵³ Koch, "Nikolaus von Kues und Meister Eckhart," 171–73.

Rudolf Haubst advanced Wackerzapp's study with a piece on Nicholas of Cusa as an "interpreter and defender" of Eckhart.⁵⁴ In his introduction Haubst noted that Wackerzapp had confined his study to Cusanus's writings of the 1440s, and that a text and a system for the comparison of Cusanus's later work was still outstanding—in particular for the enormous volume of Cusanus's sermons, for the question of Cusanus's stance towards Eckhart's teachings on the Trinity and the eternal birth of the Son in the soul, and on Cusanus's reception of Eckhart's Christology and his teaching on the divine virtues.⁵⁵ Haubst's essay may be seen as a first attempt to undertake some of this work. It aims at a textual and systematic comparison of four main themes. First, Haubst deals with Eckhart and Cusanus's understanding of God as "*esse omnium*," and the God–World relationship understood through the lens of the "*indistincta distinctio*" principle. Here he deals with Cusanus's defense (of himself and of Eckhart) in *Apologia doctae ignorantiae* against Wenck's accusation of pantheism. Second, Haubst takes up the time–eternity dialectic in Cusanus's sermon "*Ubi est qui natus est Rex Iudaeorum?*" from 1456. Third, he deals with Cusanus's reception of Eckhart's teaching concerning the divine virtues. Here, he looks in particular at Cusanus's sermon for Pentecost 1457, "*Alleulia, veni sancte spiritus*," in which an entire section is based on Eckhart's *Commentary on the Book of Wisdom* (nn. 41–45), where Eckhart is commenting on Wisdom 1:15 (*Iustitia perpetua est et immortalis*).⁵⁶ Fourth, Haubst investigates Cusanus's reception of Eckhart's Christology, in particular the idea that Christ is the deepest inwardness of each individual and that in the Incarnation Christ took on human nature in general and not simply the nature of a particular person. He points to Eckhart's influence on Cusanus's Christmas sermon from 1440. He also discusses the Köln inquisitors' misunderstanding of these teachings as precisely analogous to the way in which Wenck misunderstands and attacks Cusanus's Christology in *De docta ignorantia*.

There have also been several studies, drawing on Koch's work, which examine the question of Eckhart's influence on Cusanus's sermons. Francis Bertin did a French translation and commentary of Cusanus's "Eckhartian

⁵⁴ Rudolf Haubst, "Nikolaus von Kues als Interpret und Verteidiger Meister Eckhart," in *Freiheit und Gelassenheit. Meister Eckhart Heute*, ed. Udo Kern (Mainz: 1980), 75–96.

⁵⁵ Haubst, "Nikolaus von Kues als Interpret und Verteidiger Meister Eckhart," 78.

⁵⁶ Haubst, "Nikolaus von Kues als Interpret und Verteidiger Meister Eckhart," 86.

and Dionysian” sermons.⁵⁷ Clyde Lee Miller⁵⁸ and Elizabeth Brient⁵⁹ both contributed articles that examine the question of Eckhart’s influence on Cusanus’s sermon “*Ubi est qui natus est Rex Iudaeorum?*” (Sermo CCXVI). Miller presents an exegesis of the sermon, situating Cusanus’s appropriation of Eckhart in the context of Cusanus’s theoretical writings in general and within the larger Christian Neoplatonic tradition in which they both operate. He views Cusanus as providing a further explication of Eckhart’s often concise and paradoxical formulations. Miller gives particular attention to Cusanus’s defense of Eckhart’s teaching of the eternity of creation. “They both employ a kind of dialectical Neoplatonism that allows them to think from God to creature or from creatures to God without either distorting or separating the two.”⁶⁰ Brient argues that while Cusanus’s sermon is indeed a close and careful reading of Eckhart’s commentary on John 1:38, it nevertheless embodies significant changes in emphasis, tone, and trajectory. The overall movement of Eckhart’s commentary is *from* a consideration of God’s omnipresence in the world as the being of beings, *to* a consideration of God as He is in Himself, insofar as He transcends all finite beings in their particularity. In contrast, Cusanus begins and ends his sermon with the *incarnate* Christ in conversation with men in the world. For Cusanus, like Eckhart, God is the source and goal of all things; but He is also—as Christ—the infinite way or middle. It is in this emphasis on Christ as the *link* between God and creation, the locus of divine enfolding and unfolding, that Cusanus most departs from Eckhart in his own analysis of the place of God.⁶¹ “Christ is the joint or limit between two orders of infinity: the absolute infinity of God and the privative infinity of creation. Whereas Eckhart never tires of contrasting the two orders,

⁵⁷ Francis Bertin, *Nicolas de Cues; Sermons eckhartiens et dionysiens. Introduction, traduction, notes et commentaire*, (Sagesses chrétiennes) (Paris: 1998). Bertin translates Cusanus’s Sermons XXII, CXL, CXLII, CCXVI, CCXLIII.

⁵⁸ Clyde L. Miller, “Meister Eckhart in Nicholas of Cusa’s Sermon: *Ubi est qui natus est Rex Iudaeorum?*” in *Nicholas of Cusa and His Age: Intellect and Spirituality. Essays Dedicated to the Memory of F. Edward Cranz, Thomas P. McTighe and Charles Trinkaus*, ed. Thomas M. Izbicki and Christopher M. Bellito (Leiden: 2002), 105–25.

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Brient, “Meister Eckhart and Nicholas of Cusa on the ‘Where’ of God,” in *Nicholas of Cusa and His Age: Intellect and Spirituality. Essays dedicated to the memory of F. E. Cranz, Th. P. McTighe and Ch. Trinkaus*, ed. Thomas M. Izbicki and Christopher M. Bellito (Leiden: 2002), 127–50.

⁶⁰ Miller, “*Ubi est*,” 113.

⁶¹ Brient, “The ‘Where’ of God,” 136–37.

Cusanus makes metaphysical speculation of their dynamic interrelation a focal point—if not the focal point—of his thought.”⁶²

With the completion of the critical edition of Cusanus's sermons in 2004 and the soon to be completed critical edition of Eckhart's German sermons⁶³ comes the opportunity to undertake a careful textual comparison of Cusanus's sermons to the sermon corpus of Meister Eckhart. Georg Steer has made an important first step in this direction in a paper which aims to describe the dissemination of Eckhart's sermons and Cusanus's familiarity with Eckhart's work.⁶⁴ Steer begins with a brief discussion of the influence of Eckhart's Latin writings, both the sermons and commentaries contained in Codex Cusanus 21, on Nicholas of Cusa. Steer also discusses the significance of the headings describing the condemned and suspect articles from *In agro dominico* in Codex Cusanus 21,⁶⁵ and Cusanus's defense of Eckhart in *Apologia doctae ignornantiae*. Steer then takes up the question of whether Cusanus was familiar with Eckhart's German sermons as well as the Latin works. Steer grants that there is no direct evidence to show that he was. Nevertheless, he speculates that it is possible and even likely that when, in his *Apologia*, Cusanus wrote about having seen much of Eckhart's work in various libraries, including “*sermons multos*,” he was referring to Eckhart's German sermons.

Steer notes that Cusanus could not have seen a collection of Eckhart's German sermons comparable to his collection of the Latin sermons, because such a collection did not exist. Eckhart's German sermons were never collected into a single codex and disseminated as such, and we do

⁶² Brient, “The ‘Where’ of God,” 150. On Cusanus's understanding of Christ as limit concept, relating two orders of infinity, see also Brient, *The Immanence of the Infinite: Hans Blumenberg and the Threshold to Modernity* (Washington, D.C.: 2002), 228–42.

⁶³ The critical edition of Eckhart's Latin sermons was completed in 1956. The full Volume IV of the *Deutsche Werke*, which will complete the publication of Eckhart's German sermons and his German works as a whole, is underway and is in the hands of Georg Steer, who completed DW IV, 1 (German Sermons 87–105) and DW IV, 2 Lieferung 1f (German Sermons 106–28) in 2003.

⁶⁴ Georg Steer, “Die Predigten des Cusanus im Vergleich mit dem Predigtwerk von Meister Eckhart,” in *Die Sermones des Nikolaus von Kues*, ed. Klaus Kremer, Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft 30, 145–69. See also Georg Steer, “Predigt 101 *Dum medium silentium tenerent omnia*,” in *Lectura Eckhardi. Predigten Meister Eckharts von Fachgelehrten gelesen und gedeutet*, ed. Loris Sturlese (Stuttgart, 1998), 247–88, especially 281, 284; and Marie-Anne Vannier, “L'apport des *Sermons* 101 à 104 aux études Eckhartiennes,” in *La naissance de Dieu dans l'âme chez Eckhart et Nicolas de Cues* (Patri-moines christianisme), ed. Marie-Anne Vannier (Paris: 2006), 27–38.

⁶⁵ The last part of Steer's essay also deals with the way in which Cusanus annotated the excerpt from Eckhart's condemnation in Codex Cusanus 21.

not know whether or not Eckhart himself had ever had plans to do so. He may well have had individual sermons copied, as he did with the “Book of Divine Consolation” and the sermon “On the Noble Man,” which he referred to as the “Book of Benedictus” and which was sent to the queen of Hungary.⁶⁶ Steer notes that Eckhart may have also planned the sermon-cycle “On eternal birth,” which had a wide dissemination. It originally contained four sermons and was later expanded to include seven. Speer speculates that, at least in its earliest copies, it might have still carried Eckhart’s name. Today there are still 54 known copies of German Sermon 104. The Mainz manuscript 221 was an early copy from the third quarter of the 14th century written in the rheinish-frankish dialect, and Speer notes that Cusanus might have come across this copy of German Sermon 104. In any case we know that individual sermons of Eckhart’s along with other sermons and spiritual writings were circulating very early on, because the sentences suspected of heresy (in his condemnation) were drawn from just such collections. There was one collection of sermons, Steer notes, which could, in a sense, be considered as a sort of “collection” of Eckhart’s German sermons. It is a collection of sermons entitled “*Paradisus anime intelligentis*” and consists of 64 sermons taken from 12 different named authors. There are 32 (31) of Eckhart’s sermons in this collection. Also, Speer notes, Eckhart’s most famous sermon, the “Armutspredigt” (sermon on poverty), was translated into Latin at the beginning of the 15th century and a copy is preserved in a Koblenz manuscript.⁶⁷

Steer thinks there are some indications that would allow us to guess that Nicholas of Cusa knew Eckhart’s sermon-cycle on eternal birth, the “*Paradisus anime intelligentis*” and perhaps also the “Armutspredigt,” as well as the German sermons which were preserved in Straßburg or Köln, that is, Quint 10–15, 22, and 51.⁶⁸ At the end of his essay Steer takes up two important themes shared by Eckhart and Cusanus: the birth of the Word in the soul and the Lord’s Supper. Steer suspects the influence of Eckhart’s German writings on Cusanus in both of these contexts.

Steer emphasizes, however, that it would only be possible to show that Nicholas of Cusa was familiar with these Eckhart manuscripts through a “rigorously carried out ‘textual and systematic’ comparison,”⁶⁹ which has

⁶⁶ See Steer’s discussion, “Die Predigten,” 151.

⁶⁷ See Steer, “Die Predigten,” 153, n. 28.

⁶⁸ See Steer, “Die Predigten,” 153, n. 30.

⁶⁹ Steer, “Die Predigten,” 153.

yet to be undertaken.⁷⁰ This task is all the more challenging, Steer notes, because there is a good deal of overlap between many of Eckhart's German and Latin sermons—not only in the conceptual content, but also in the arrangement and wording. Indeed, it was on this basis that Josef Quint was able to authenticate German Sermons 17–24. Steer underscores that such overlap is to be found not only in Eckhart's Latin sermons but also his Latin writings in general, particularly in his *Commentary on John*. Steer also notes that fundamental parts of Eckhart's German texts were, of course, communicated in the lists of condemned articles and Eckhart's *Verteidigungsschrift* (*Defense*) from 26 September 1326; and he reminds us that Cusanus had access to the now lost text in which Eckhart defended *articuli notati et refutati* from his *Commentary on John*.⁷¹

There have been two notable treatments devoted to an examination of Cusanus's marginalia in his Eckhart manuscript: an article by Donald Duclow and an important new book by Stefanie Frost. In his article, Duclow first examines Cusanus's references to Eckhart in the context of his debate with Johannes Wenck, and then reflects on the significance of Cusanus's marginalia to Codex Cusanus 21 with a focus on the particularly heavy marginalia in Eckhart's Sermon XXIX, *Deus unus est*. Duclow concludes by reflecting on some of Cusanus's variations on Eckhartian themes (e.g. filiation, "indistinct distinction," the dialectic of transcendence and immanence, etc.) as well as underscoring some important thematic differences. For example, Cusanus echoes Eckhart's intellectualist spirituality, but does not follow Eckhart's occasional claims about a more radical union with God, beyond will and intellect, in the soul's ground. Duclow further points to Cusanus's strong affirmation of the self in *De visione dei* ("Unless I am my own, You [Lord] are not mine."),⁷² which would seem to run counter to Eckhart's theme of detachment and self-denial. "In *De visione dei*, mutual vision unties and distinguishes God and the soul, as each sees and is seen by the other."⁷³ Duclow concludes by pointing out that the question of Eckhart's influence on Cusanus is complicated by the fact that both thinkers are part of a common Neoplatonic tradition "whose vocabulary and themes they share with many others."⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Steer, "Die Predigten," 151–53.

⁷¹ Steer, "Die Predigten," 154–55. On this "second" defense see note 14 above.

⁷² Cusanus, *De visione dei* (h VII, 27), ed. and trans. Jasper Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa's Dialectical Mysticism* (Minneapolis: 1985), 147.

⁷³ Duclow, "Margins," 65.

⁷⁴ "The question of Eckhart's influence thus becomes complicated as Cusanus reads, among others, Proclus, Pseudo-Dionysius, Eriugena, and Albert the Great. Hence, even

Frost's book length study aims at elucidating Cusanus's reception of Eckhart by a careful examination of Cusanus's marginalia to his copy of Eckhart's *Opus tripartitum*, Codex Cusanus 21. Frost begins her study by providing a detailed description of Codex Cusanus 21. She then gives an extensive description of Cusanus's marginalia, situating each annotation in its specific context. Next, she provides a detailed discussion of Cusanus's explicit reception of Eckhart in his *Apologia* and the four sermons in which Cusanus refers to Eckhart by name. Finally, in the last section of the book she lists all 406 marginalia.

Frost prefaces her concluding remarks with a series of negative observations.⁷⁵ Contrary to what one might expect, the passages that Cusanus highlighted in his marginalia were seldom taken and worked up in his own writings. A few of the marginalia are to be found in his writings.⁷⁶ More often than not, however, when integrating Eckhart into his own writing, Cusanus uses passages taken from Eckhart that are unmarked in Codex Cusanus 21, or in which the marginal comments point in a different direction from the one he takes in his own writings. Frost further notes that Cusanus does not mark exclusively insightful, highly speculative, or otherwise exceptional passages. He does not take a position on what he is reading in the marginalia, so it is not possible to follow out a discussion he is having with the text from the marginalia alone.⁷⁷ We cannot distinguish different periods of reading (i.e. layers of notes from successive readings) or determine specific times when he made the notes. Beyond simple pragmatic grounds, we cannot correlate the different ways in which the text is marked with specific meanings. Cusanus does not annotate Eckhart in order to understand Eckhart, she claims, nor did he annotate Eckhart's

where Eckhart speaks most directly to Nicholas's metaphysics and spirituality, we should be wary of claiming too direct a connection between their teachings. For example, Cusanus claims the *non aliud* as his own invention, and credits not Eckhart but Pseudo-Dionysius with having come closest to this discovery (*De non aliud* I, h XIII, 5). He similarly invokes Dionysius's authority for emphasizing intellect in mystical theology, and his doctrine of intellect also owes much to the Albertist school that includes Dietrich of Freiburg and Ulrich of Strasbourg as well as Eckhart himself. As these instances suggest, we must recall that Eckhart and Cusanus are late medieval thinkers within a common Platonizing tradition, whose vocabulary and themes they share with many others." Duclow, "Margins," 69.

⁷⁵ Frost, 221.

⁷⁶ Frost, 216. See marg. 110, 111, 112, 124f.

⁷⁷ For example, on the question of Eckhart and Thomas's differing conceptions of analogy, we cannot tell by looking at the marginalia alone whose side Cusanus takes. In his marginalia Cusanus remains neutral. See Frost, 172.

text because he saw it simply as a collection of material to be worked up in his own writings.⁷⁸

Hence, from the marginalia alone, Frost argues, one cannot directly arrive at positive conclusions concerning Cusanus's reception of Eckhart. This is why, in order to evaluate the significance of the marginalia, Frost goes through and examines each one in turn and places it in the context of the specific Eckhartian text in which it appears, before explaining why she devotes so much attention to Cusanus's explicit reception of Eckhart in his own works. For the benefit of the English reader I will first describe the results of her examination of the marginalia and then of her study of Cusanus's explicit reception of Eckhart.

As a result of her study, Frost makes some observations about the marginalia in general. The character of the annotations in the treatises and in the sermons is very similar, though she hazards that Cusanus notes "examples" more often in the treatises and theoretical speculations more often in the sermons. Cusanus has far more annotations in the sermons than in the treatises.⁷⁹ A focal point of the annotations to the sermons is the theme of the birth of God in the soul.⁸⁰ Cusanus also annotates passages on Christ, especially on the equivalence of Christ as Son of God with us as God's sons.⁸¹

A further common characteristic of the marginalia is that Cusanus refers far more frequently to ontological and epistemological themes than he does to moral-theological themes in Eckhart.⁸² The connection between God and the world (*esse* and *esse hoc aut hoc*) stands in the center of the marginalia, both in theoretical form and through the numerous remarks of *exemplum*, where the *exempla* show the relationship between God and the world in particularly illuminating ways.⁸³ Other major themes that run throughout the marginalia include God's Being and his Activity [Wirken], and the essence of human being. Cusanus's favorite themes repeatedly deal with the unity of opposites.⁸⁴ Some examples include: God is in all or in none; God is wholly inner and wholly outer; God is *quodlibet in quolibet*;

⁷⁸ Frost, 223.

⁷⁹ Frost, 165.

⁸⁰ Cusanus does not usually use this terminology in the Latin sermons; it derives from the German sermons. See Frost, 164. In the Latin works this same idea is also formulated as God sinking in (*illabi*) our soul. See Frost, 170.

⁸¹ Frost, 170.

⁸² Frost, 165. See also Duclow, "Margins," 65.

⁸³ Frost, 222.

⁸⁴ Frost, 222.

God gives everything or nothing; God gives to all or to no one, always or never; God effects everything *immediate*, though the efficacy of secondary causes is not thereby negated; God is the stillness that is more moving than all motion; the identity of acting and having acted; the equivalence of activity and rest; the unity of thought and being; the infinite sphere metaphor ("God is an infinite sphere, whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere"); discussions of "number" in God who is one; and the *distinctus-indistinctus* theme.⁸⁵

When Frost turns to the question of what exactly Cusanus had learned from Eckhart, she begins by underscoring the difficulties any commentator must face. First, Frost distinguishes three different ways in which Cusanus draws upon Eckhart in his works: (1) with explicit references to Eckhart,⁸⁶ (2) with references to something Eckhart wrote, which do not

⁸⁵ Frost, 167–69, 222. Cusanus also marked passages concerning the immanent Trinity and those dealing with Augustine's metaphor for the Trinity as the unity of the lover, the beloved, and the love that binds them. He was especially interested in the passages on love as the bond. (See Frost, 167.) Love is a repeatedly marked theme. For example, he marks passages that describe God as love, and he marks the presentation of the *communio sanctorum*, which experiences its unity through love. Other examples include: only God loves all; the simultaneous description of love as passivity; self-love and God's love and life in love; the relation between love and thought, being or affects. (See Frost, 168, 171.) The relation of grace and knowing, that is, the difference between *lumen intellectus* and *lumen gratiae*, is also an essential theme, as is grace as such (more often annotated in the sermons). Cusanus also marks passages that thematize the truth concerning our talk about God. (See Frost, 171.) Cusanus further notes passages on the powers of intellect and will, and the unity of these powers with their objects, drawing on parallels with seeing and loving. He also notes passages that describe the essence or ground of the soul as above the soul's powers of intellect and will, and which sinks itself in God. (See Frost, 171.)

Cusanus marks passages that discuss the creative activity of God and God's tri-causality. He also marks passages that explicitly define God as the origin and goal of all things, and passages that discuss the desire of all things for Being insofar as the creature in itself is nothing and has its whole being from God. In sermons and treatises he marks passages that discuss the immediate presence of God's activity and questions concerning the activity and efficacy of secondary causes. Cusanus often annotates those passages that relate the realms of (spiritual) thought and (worldly) being, often formulated in the relation between heaven and earth. For example, he marks passages that use light and heat to clarify the *anologia attributionis*, and passages that describe the relationship between justice and the just man. (See Frost 170.)

⁸⁶ Cusanus refers to Eckhart by name in *Apologia doctae ignorantiae* and in the four sermons: *Verbum caro factum est* (two versions), *Ubi est qui natus est Rex Iudaeorum?*, and *Loquimini ad petram*. Frost notes that Cusanus also names Eckhart in a note in Codex Cusanus 220 (a collection with Cusanus's own writings): "Magister Eckardus dicit: sicud se habet esse in donis naturalibus, ita caritas in donis gratiosis. Nam vivere, intelligere et quidquid dici potest, est post esse, et ipsum esse est sine quo illa esse nequeunt, sic de caritate in donis morum etc." Cited by Frost, 173, note 714. See also Josef Koch, *Vier Predigten im Geiste Eckharts*, CT 1, 2–5, 39.

name Eckhart explicitly, but rather introduce Eckhart by “*quidam*,” and (3) when Eckhart is presented but without any attribution at all.⁸⁷ Frost notes that references of the first sort are easy to collect and examine. Finding references of the second sort would involve going through and finding all the “*quidam*” passages in Cusanus’s entire corpus and examining them for clear references to Eckhart. Finally, she emphasizes the extreme difficulty of definitively verifying references of the third sort because the “motives, thoughts, and even the formulations” are common to so many in the philosophical tradition which Eckhart shares—in particular the Neoplatonic tradition, which is disseminated in numerous medieval commentaries to Proclus and Dionysius in particular.⁸⁸ In the end, Frost concludes, we simply cannot establish precisely what Cusanus took from Eckhart and used, modified, or expanded in his own work. She does think that we can identify thematic areas of Eckhartian influence on Cusanus, but, like Duclow, emphasizes that we cannot draw a simple line of influence from Eckhart to Cusanus. Influence, she rightly insists, is a living process in which different streams meet, manifold traditions are creatively taken up, and in the reflective reception, something new is formed.⁸⁹

Eckhart’s condemnation also makes the entire task of assessing Eckhart’s influence on Cusanus especially difficult, not simply in those passages in which he cites Eckhart by name, but also in those passages where he quotes Eckhart without giving his name. He would have been careful about how he gave expression to Eckhart’s work. Thus, in her analysis of Cusanus’s reception of Eckhart, Frost gives most attention to those passages in which Cusanus refers to Eckhart explicitly, by name (in *Apologia doctae ignorantiae* and the four sermons *Verbum caro factum est*, *Ubi est qui natus est Rex Iudaeorum?*, and *Loquimini ad petram*).

Frost highlights the diplomatic and careful way in which Cusanus deals with Eckhart in these texts. Frost reads Cusanus’s “defense” of Eckhart in the *Apologia*, for instance, as careful “diplomacy.” Cusanus knew that Eckhart’s teachings had been condemned, and he could see that he himself would be in danger if the orthodoxy of his own teachings were doubted. Cusanus thus exonerates Eckhart, Frost argues, with the goal of

⁸⁷ Frost notes (173) that Wackerzapp is especially good at presenting these. He shows through careful philological analysis countless passages that reveal the influence of Eckhart.

⁸⁸ Frost, 174.

⁸⁹ Frost, 175.

not exposing himself to the suspicion of heresy. Frost highlights the fact that, when Cusanus describes his acquaintance with Eckhart's writings, he does not mention his own Eckhart manuscript, which he had acquired five years earlier, and which he certainly must have used in composing the *Apologia*. She also notes that Cusanus only defends Eckhart here against Wenck's charges, which also directly applied to his own views in *De docta ignorantia* (namely, the charge of pantheism and the universalizing of Christ). Cusanus first of all refutes the charges in his own case and only then, by analogy, in Eckhart's case as well. Beyond this he does not further defend Eckhart. He does not address Wenck's accusations concerning the emptying of the soul, the citadel or spark in the soul, or the eternity of creation. Also, Frost reads the wish that Eckhart's writings "should be removed from public places"⁹⁰ as more diplomatic in nature, rather than as an expression of a real concern on Cusanus's part.⁹¹

Cusanus's further explicit references to Eckhart are to be found in four of his sermons from the Brixen period. The suspicion that Eckhart's condemnation is always on Cusanus's mind whenever he writes about Eckhart by name is confirmed, Frost holds, when we look at the four sermons. In the first two sermons, *Verbum caro factum est* (1453/54), Cusanus cites Eckhart with reference to Jordan of Quedlinburg's use of Eckhart.⁹² Hence, Frost describes Cusanus, here, as "hiding" behind Jordan of Quedlinburg.⁹³ Further, Cusanus's separation of the *mundus visibilis* and the *mundus aeternus* in *Verbum caro factum est*, is meant to mitigate any Wenckian style reproach concerning the eternity of the world.⁹⁴ In *Ubi est qui natus est Rex Iudaeorum?* (1456) Cusanus at last directly responds to Wenck's

⁹⁰ *Apologia*, h II, 25, 9–12.

⁹¹ Frost, 175–85.

⁹² Jordan was an Augustinian hermit, who died ca. 1380, and put together a collection of sermons entitled *Sermones de tempore*. (Iordannus de Quedlinburg, *Opus postillarum et sermonum de evangelis dominicalibus*, Argentinae 1483.) In this collection there is a group of sermons that are put together out of pieces of Eckhart's texts (LXVIII–LXXVIII), without referring to Eckhart by name. See Frost's discussion, 185. See Jeremiah Hackett, "The Reception of Meister Eckhart: Mysticism, Philosophy and Theology in Henry of Friemar (the Elder) and Jordanus of Quedlinburg," in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt*, ed. A. Speer and L. Wegener, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 32 (Berlin: 2005), 554–86; and Jeremiah Hackett, "The Use of a Text Quotation from Meister Eckhart by Jordanus of Quedlinburg (Saxony), O.S.A.," *Proceedings of Patristic, Mediaeval and Renaissance Conference* (Villanova, Pa.) 2 (1977), 97–102. For a summary of the most recent research on Eckhart and Jordanus see Nadia Bray's chapter in the present volume.

⁹³ Frost, 217.

⁹⁴ Frost, 218.

polemic against Eckhart for teaching the eternity of the world, and gives a clear defense of Eckhart's teaching with the support (and the diplomatic cover) of a quotation from Augustine's *Confessions*.⁹⁵ Only in the last sermon *Loquimini ad petram* (1457), Frost notes, does Cusanus quote Eckhart in a straightforward manner, though not capaciously.⁹⁶

Frost also notes that Cusanus often reformulates Eckhart in these texts, using scholastic or Thomistic formulas, in order to secure the orthodoxy of the teaching. For example, Cusanus talks about the difference between nature and grace (*Ubi est qui natus est Rex Iudaeorum?*) in a context that is not found in Eckhart. He emphasizes the *fides formata* (*Ubi est qui natus est Rex Iudaeorum?*, *Loquimini ad petram*), which at least conceptually is not found in Eckhart. The *communio sanctorum* in the sermon *Loquimini ad petram* is directed by Cusanus to the *ecclesia triumphans*.⁹⁷ This all shows, Frost argues, that Cusanus clearly took precautions when he referred to Eckhart in his writings.⁹⁸ Insofar as that is the case, she observes, it is all the more noteworthy that he names Eckhart explicitly at all. There is something almost playful, she writes, when in the sermon, *Ubi est qui natus est Rex Iudaeorum?*, he fails to name Eckhart as his source for the main body of the text, but then goes on to take up Eckhart's condemned teaching on the eternity of creation explicitly; or when he says that Eckhart is to be found in various libraries or refers to Jordan of Quendlinburg.⁹⁹ Frost concludes that Cusanus takes up a "secret defense" of Eckhart's teachings. If you look just beneath the surface, she says, you see that in the *Apologia doctae ignorantiae* Cusanus used Eckhart's ideas in order to defend himself, and in two of his sermons Cusanus

⁹⁵ In the sermon, *Hoc facite in meam commemorationem*, given in Brixen on 30 May 1456 (*Sermo* CCXXXV, h XIX, 193–200), Cusanus takes up article 10 from Eckhart's condemnation, which compares the transformation of the sacraments to the transformation in Christ. (See also *Sermo* CCXXXV n. 9, 1–26, h XIX, 197f.) But Cusanus does not refer to Eckhart by name, rather he introduces him as a *quidam vir doctus sic intellexit, qui meo iudicio ab aliis minus iuste fuit reprehensus* (*Sermo* CCXXXVn. 10, 1f., h XIX, 198). Here he names Paul, Augustine, and Ambrose explicitly as security. (Compare also *Sermo* CCXXXV, n. 10, 1–15, h XIX, 198f.) L. Baur, CT III, 1, 51–55, makes the observation that Cusanus regularly tries to connect Dionysius with his view. As the purported student of the Apostle Paul, Dionysius guarantees the orthodoxy of the teaching. Cited in Frost, 217, note 918.

⁹⁶ Frost, 217.

⁹⁷ Frost, 218.

⁹⁸ Frost, 217.

⁹⁹ Frost, 217.

shows the orthodoxy of teachings of Eckhart that had been condemned.¹⁰⁰ Also, when, in his sermons, *Verbum caro factum est*, Cusanus draws attention to Jordan von Quedlinburg's use of Eckhart, he shows that Eckhart was read and "lives again," just as the declaration in the *Apologia doctae ignorantiae*, that Eckhart is to be found in various libraries, highlights the continuing presence of the condemned.¹⁰¹

Frost also notes the interesting fact that Cusanus gives nearly all of the adapted Eckhartian texts a Christological intensification not found in the original—only the sermon *Verbum caro factum est* has no Christological resonances. In the *Apologia* (on the issue of Christ) Cusanus appropriates Eckhart's text and subtly changes his terminology. In the sermon *Ubi est qui natus est Rex Iudaeorum?* Christ takes on a central function as "way," and in *Loquimini ad petram* he puts forward the *communio sanctorum* as *corpus Christi mysticum*. Frost also observes that Cusanus takes Eckhart's ontological considerations and gives them an epistemological turn by changing the wording or the context of the text. This is particularly clear, she notes, in the two sermons, *Verbum caro factum est*.¹⁰² Both Eckhart and Cusanus are interested in the way in which divine and worldly being can be mutually illuminated, the way in which each domain illuminates the other. But in this shared interest there is also an important difference:

Eckhart seeks the illumination of both domains because he is on the search for Truth, which extends over everything, and insofar as the nearer one comes to the Truth, the more one pursues the Truth in all things. The world has no theoretical interest in itself, it only serves the end of moving us beyond the world, in order to arrive at Being and Truth in themselves. Cusanus's goal is also being with God, but his glance remains longer on the created world and the human spirit, so that through reflection on the human spirit, we may break through this limit, in order to be lifted up to the truth.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ In the sermon, *Hoc facite in meam commemorationem* (1456, Sermo CCXXXV, h XIX, 193–200), he takes up article 10 from Eckhart's condemnation and shows it in its orthodoxy, in the sermon, *Ubi est natus est Rex Iudaeorum?* (1456, Sermo CCXVI, h XIX, 82–96), he defends Eckhart's condemned teaching concerning the eternity of creation.

¹⁰¹ Frost, 223.

¹⁰² Frost's discussion here is adapted from an earlier paper, "Die Meister Eckhart-Rezeption des Nikolaus von Kues. Einige Beobachtungen zu den Sermones CXL und CXLI des Nikolaus von Kues," in *Nicolaus Cusanus. Perpektiven seiner Geistphilosophie. Internationale Tagung junger Cusanus-ForscherInnen von 24.–26. Mai 2002 am Institut für Cusanus-Forschung der Universität und der Theologischen Fakultät Trier*, ed. Harald Schwaetzer, Philosophie interdisziplinär 6 (Regensburg: 2003), 149–62.

¹⁰³ Frost, 222.

In the end, Frost concludes, Cusanus does not annotate Eckhart in order to understand Eckhart, nor did he annotate Eckhart's text because he saw it simply as a collection of material to be worked up in his own writings. Cusanus annotated Eckhart's text because in him he had found a thinker who had vividly represented the relationship between God and the world. He annotated Eckhart's text in order to make use of the insights gleaned from Eckhart in order to approach closer and closer to the truth himself.¹⁰⁴

There have also been a number of articles devoted to particular areas of thematic comparison between Eckhart and Cusanus. L. Mannarino¹⁰⁵ and Emilie Zum Brunn¹⁰⁶ have both contributed essays that explore ecclesiastic or ecumenical themes in the two thinkers. Mannarino holds that Cusanus's principle "*una fides in rituum varietate*" in *De pace fidei* is indebted to Eckhart's teaching of the priority of inner faith over external actions.¹⁰⁷ Zum Brunn's essay speculates on ecumenical themes implicit in Eckhart's conception of the universality of truth and of human nature. Eckhart had held that the virtue of detachment was to be found in both the "Pagan masters" (i.e. Greek philosophers) as well as in the books of the Old and New Testaments and their commentators. Zum Brunn sees here a doctrine of "double revelation" (reason and Scripture), which, along with a notion of the universality of human nature, lays the conditions for a nascent ecumenism. Zum Brunn sees in Cusanus's ecumenical themes in *De pace fidei* a complement to the ideal universality of human nature, as well as an important shift in epistemology, in which the divine Truth sought by all, in a diversity of rites and of divine names, guides all but remains ever elusive and ineffable.

Reiner Manstetten¹⁰⁸ and Burkhard Mojsisch¹⁰⁹ have both contributed articles that explore the two thinkers in relationship to negative theology

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ L. Mannarino, "Visione intellettuale die Dio e fede universale: Cusano lettore di Eckhart," *Medioevo e Rinascimento* 2 (1988), 131–215.

¹⁰⁶ Emilie Zum Brunn, "Steps toward ecumenism in Meister Eckhart and Nicholas of Cusa," in *God, the Self, and Nothingness; Reflections Eastern and Western*, ed. R.E. Carter (New York: 1990), 73–80.

¹⁰⁷ See Frost, 4.

¹⁰⁸ Reiner Manstetten, "Absgeschiedenheit. Von der negativen Theologie zur negativen Anthropologie: Nikolaus von Kues und Meister Eckhart," in *600 Jahre Nikolaus von Kues (1401–2001): Tradition und Aktualität Negativer Theologie*, ed. M. Eckert, Theologische Quartalschrift 181/ 2 (Tübingen-Donauwörth: 2001), 112–13.

¹⁰⁹ Burkhard Mojsisch, "Nichts und Negation. Meister Eckhart und Nikolaus von Kues, in *Historia philosophie Medii Aevi. Studien zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*.

and the role of negation more generally. Manstetten focuses on negative theology in Eckhart and Cusanus and sees in it the possibility of engaging modern critiques of religion, insofar as negative theology explicitly thematizes the unknowability of God, and so would, in his view, be able to underscore logical errors in atheistic arguments, which claim to prove the nonexistence of God.¹¹⁰ Mojsisch, inspired by the Heideggerian question concerning the status of Non-Being, offers a detailed and careful analysis of nothingness and negation in Eckhart and Cusanus. For both, negation is constitutive for the movement of reason. Mojsisch views Cusanus as breaking more radically with Aristotle than Eckhart had, in particular, in Cusanus's assertion of the coincidence of Being and Non-Being from the divine standpoint, and so develops a "translogical, transconjectural conception of negation."¹¹¹

There have also been a few studies on Eckhart and Cusanus's use of the infinite sphere metaphor for God ("God is an infinite sphere, whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere") and the significance of its cosmological application at the hands of Cusanus. Dietrich Mahnke¹¹² wrote the seminal study of the use of this mathematical symbol from the romantic period back to its ancient roots. There, he handles Cusanus's appropriation of the metaphor from Eckhart and Cusanus's transference of the metaphor to describe the cosmos.¹¹³ More recent articles by Karsten Harries¹¹⁴ and Elizabeth Brient¹¹⁵ build on Mahnke's work. Harries' article explores the philosophical link between medieval mysticism and the emergence of modern cosmology. Harries focuses on the extensive infinitization of the cosmos and on the way in which the construction of the metaphor itself reveals the capacity of the human intellect to project the ideal of a genuinely a-perspectival understanding of the world. Brient's article focuses not only on the extensive infinitization of

Festschrift für Kurt Flasch zu seinem 60. Geburtstag, vol. 2, ed. Burkhard Mojsisch and O. Pluta (Amsterdam: 1991), 675–93.

¹¹⁰ See Frost, 5.

¹¹¹ Mojsisch, "Nichts und Negation," 691. See Frost, 5–6.

¹¹² Dietrich Mahnke, *Unendliche Sphäre und Allmittelpunkt: Beiträge zur Genealogie der Mathematischen Mystik* (Halle: 1937).

¹¹³ Wackerzapp has noted that, in his treatment of Cusanus's *De docta ignorantia*, Mahnke draws connections to some of Eckhart's German texts, and argues that it is highly questionable that Cusanus would have known them. See Wackerzapp, 7.

¹¹⁴ Karsten Harries, "The Infinite Sphere: Comments on the History of a Metaphor," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 13 (1975), 5–16.

¹¹⁵ Elizabeth Brient, "Transitions to a Modern Cosmology: Meister Eckhart and Nicholas of Cusa on the Intensive Infinite," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 37 (1999), 575–600.

the cosmos, but also on the ontological and epistemological consequences of its intensive infinitization, where each created being is understood as a "finite infinity."

Harries and Brient have also written books that deal with the important role played by speculative reflection on infinity in the epochal transition from the medieval to the modern world. Harries¹¹⁶ defends the thesis that "the revolution that inaugurated modern science and helped shape our technological world follows and presupposes a shift in human self-understanding that announces itself more clearly in the sermons of Meister Eckhart than in the learned discourses of his more scientifically inclined scholastic contemporaries."¹¹⁷ Harries examines this shift in Eckhart's reflections on the infinity of God and the infinite self-transcendence of the human mind. The radical decentering that is a consequence of such reflections on the infinity of God and of man, Harries argues, invite a humanist recentering at the hands of thinkers like Alberti and Cusanus. Brient¹¹⁸ takes up the themes explored in her earlier article and devotes Part Three of her book on the epochal transition from the medieval to the modern age to a detailed reading of the way in which the immanence of the divine infinite in the world is conceived and transformed by Eckhart and then again by Cusanus, leading to important shifts in cosmology, ontology, and epistemology.

Walter Haug and Petra Hoeninghaus-Schornsheim have made contributions that situate Eckhart and Cusanus in relation to the epochal threshold. Hoeninghaus-Schornsheim¹¹⁹ has written a dissertation which compares Eckhart and Cusanus's teachings concerning the imaging of God (in the Trinity, the creation, and in the mystical perfection of the image of God in man). In Eckhart she focuses on the image-motif as it plays out in the unfolding of divine unity in the Trinity and in the creation, and then in the return of the soul to the originary divine unity. In Cusanus she focuses on the image-motif as it plays out in divine enfolding and unfolding, and the development of a new logic of the coincidence of opposites (in *De docta ignorantia*) and the mystical transcendence of the wall of

¹¹⁶ Karsten Harries, *Infinity and Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass.: 2001).

¹¹⁷ Harries, *Infinity and Perspective*, 15.

¹¹⁸ Elizabeth Brient, *The Immanence of the Infinite: Hans Blumenberg and the Threshold to Modernity* (Washington, D.C.: 2002). See especially Part Three: "Meister Eckhart and Nicholas of Cusa on the Immanence of the Infinite," 145–242.

¹¹⁹ Petra Hoeninghaus-Schornsheim, "Studien zur Entstehung des Bildungsbegriffs in der deutschen Mystik (Meister Eckhart, Nikolaus von Kues)," (PhD diss., Gerhard-Mercator Universität-Gesamthochschule Duisburg: 1994). See especially 123–37.

opposites to union with God (in *De visione dei*). She highlights the way in which they use the conception of *imago dei* to solve philosophical problems of the relationship between transcendence and immanence, and the infinite and the finite. She sees Cusanus as developing the image-motif in new ways, for example, in the modern themes of the infinity of creation and the emphasis on individual creativity. She notes, however, Cusanus's ambiguous position in the history of thought. He can be viewed neither as unambiguously medieval nor modern; rather, she claims, in him medieval and modern speculation coincide.¹²⁰

Haug has contributed an article that views Cusanus's reception of Eckhart in relationship to the epochal threshold, by placing Cusanus between Eckhart and Cristoforo Landino.¹²¹ Landino was apparently the first to describe the poet as *creator*, and Haug's essay asks the question, what had to happen, so that one not only dared to attribute creative capacities to human beings, but also so that the discovery of the new could become the criterion of the highest art and poetry? Haug traces the origins of this radical shift from Landino, back through Ficino, to Cusanus, who had attributed creative capacities to the human mind on the basis of its status as made in the image of the creator God. Just as God unfolds the real world in a creative *explicatio* of divine unity, so also the human mind creatively unfolds the conceptual world from its own unity. Haug contrasts this "transcendental" development in epistemology with Eckhart's absolute separation of two types of knowing: one directed to the external world of multiplicity and difference, and another turned inward, away from space, time, and difference, in preparation for the birth of the Word in the soul.¹²² Unlike Eckhart, Haug argues, Cusanus does not operate with two different forms of knowing. For Cusanus there is only one and it is mediated by the sensible world. It is precisely in the act of knowing directed outwards towards the world that the human being acts as image of the creative God, insofar as he creatively constructs the conceptual world in imitation of the divine construction of reality.¹²³ The human mind operates on analogy to the divine Creator. At the same time, human insight into this analogy leads to an experience of the radical dif-

¹²⁰ Hoeninghaus-Schornsheim, "Bildungsbegriffs," 136–37.

¹²¹ Walter Haug, "Nicolaus Cusanus zwischen Meister Eckhart und Cristoforo Landino. Der Mensch als Schöpfer und der Weg zu Gott," in *Die Wahrheit der Fiktion. Studien zur weltlichen und geistlichen Literatur des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Walter Haug (Tübingen: 2003), 538–56.

¹²² Haug, "Der Mensch als Schöpfer," 545.

¹²³ Haug, "Der Mensch als Schöpfer," 547.

ference between the two. Like Eckhart, Cusanus holds that the absolute difference is only overcome in a breakthrough. But unlike Eckhart, this is not a breakthrough into the absolute Being of the soul's ground, but a reflective self transcending of *ratio*, in order to reach what lies beyond its determined nature: the coincidence of opposites, the "wall of paradise."¹²⁴ Through God's grace one may move through this wall into unity with the divine One beyond all opposites. Haug sees here a new way of thinking the analogy formula of 1215 (dissimilar familiarity). Rather than apply the formula ontologically, by focusing on the similarity of created being to the nevertheless radically dissimilar, absolute being of God, Cusanus places human knowing in dissimilar similarity to the divine act of creation.¹²⁵

There have been quite a number of articles written on Eckhart's and Cusanus's experience of God, intellectual vision, and the relationship between mind and God.¹²⁶ Ernst Hoffmann¹²⁷ has written on the vision of God in Eckhart and Cusanus. He compares Eckhart's understanding of the vision of God with the first six chapters of Cusanus's *De visione dei*. For Eckhart, he holds, the vision of God means a return to God leaving behind all individuality. I have to become empty of myself, detached from myself—only in this way is it possible to reach absolute Being. For Cusanus, "vision of God" is participation in the absolute, bound to one's own free spontaneity and free activity. Walter Haug¹²⁸ has contributed an essay on the experience of God in Eckhart and Cusanus considered from the perspective of the analogy formula of 1215 of dissimilar similarity (Lateranum IV).¹²⁹ For both thinkers, the world is divine insofar as one

¹²⁴ Cusanus, *De visione dei*, h VI, nn. 37, 42, 49.

¹²⁵ Haug, "Der Mensch als Schöpfer," 552–54.

¹²⁶ The question of whether or not Eckhart and Cusanus should be counted among the mystics continues to be discussed. As Frost has pointed out, this question is tied to the difficult question concerning the nature of mysticism itself. In any case, commentators agree that neither can be considered a mystic of irrational experience, but that, to the extent the term applies, we are dealing here with "speculative" mysticism, or "philosophical" mysticism, or "mystical theology." See Frost, 9.

¹²⁷ Ernst Hoffmann, "Gottesschau bei Meister Eckhart und Nikolaus von Kues," in *Festschrift: Heinrich Zangger*, vol. 2, ed. Max Huber et al. (Zurich: 1935), 1033–45.

¹²⁸ Walter Haug, "Gottese Erfahrung bei Nicolaus Cusanus. Dargestellt aus der Perspektive der Analogieformel von der unähnlichen Ähnlichkeit," in *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia. Symposium zum Abschluß der Heidelberger Akademie-Ausgabe*. (Heidelberg, 11 and 12 February 2005), ed. Werner Beierwaltes and Hans G. Senger (Heidelberg: 2006), 101–45. See Frost, 10–11.

¹²⁹ "Inter Creatorem et creaturam non potest tanta similitudo notari, quin inter eos maior sit dissimilitudo notanda." Henricus Denzinger and Adolfus Schönmetzer (eds.),

recognizes it as grounded in God. Eckhart's experience of God is embedded in a transcendent transtemporality, which does not look back at the created world, whereas Cusanus holds fast to the difference in order to keep an eye free to receive the world, shining forth in incomprehensible divine light.¹³⁰

M.L. Führer¹³¹ has written an article comparing Cusanus and Eckhart on the relationship between God and the mind. Führer briefly discusses Eckhart's doctrine of the (uncreated) *scintilla animae* and its condemnation. He then goes on to trace the development of Cusanus's conception of the human mind—in *De docta ignorantia*, *De coniecturis*, and in the *Idiota de sapientia* and *de mente*—as a series of attempts to maintain Eckhart's conception of "an *apex mentis* that operates on a divine level," but which "eschews the metaphysical identity of the human mind with the mind of God."¹³² Führer argues that Cusanus's most adequately worked out account is to be found in the *Idiota de mente*, where he develops an understanding of the human mind as an image of God, reflecting the quadrivial exemplars in its understanding of creation.

Karl-Hermann Kandler¹³³ has written an article on intellectual contemplation in Dietrich of Freiburg and Nikolaus of Kues. Dietrich held that the *intellectus agens* is the locus in which we will unite with God in an immediate blissful contemplative vision and be beatified. He understands the *intellectus agens* as fundamentally directed towards and receptive of God. Cusanus did not know Dietrich's writings but Dietrich's ideas were transmitted to Cusanus through the intermediary of Meister Eckhart, who stresses the *visio intellectualis*. That is to say, Kandler writes, "mystical theology is an experience of the divine world within the capacity of human thinking. Thus, man as *deus creatus* may ascend because it is God who is descending to him. The terminology of both these thinkers may be different, but fundamentally they mean the same: Human intellect is directed towards God."¹³⁴

Enchiridion Symbolorum, Definitionum et Declarationum de rebus fidei et morum (Freiburg im Breisgau: 1967), note 806, 262. Cited in Haug, "Gotteserfahrung," 103, note 2.

¹³⁰ Haug, "Gotteserfahrung bei Nicolaus Cusanus," 145.

¹³¹ M.L. Führer, "The Evolution of the Quadrivial Modes of Theology in Nicholas of Cusa's analysis of the Soul," *American Benedictine Review* 36 (1985), 325–42.

¹³² Führer, "Quadrivial Modes," 341.

¹³³ Karl-Hermann Kandler, "Die intellektuale Anschauung bei Dietrich von Freiberg und Nikolaus von Kues," *Kerygma und Dogma* 43 (1997), 2–19.

¹³⁴ Kandler, "Die intellektuale Anschauung," 19.

Martin Thurner¹³⁵ has contributed an essay that examines the ways in which Eckhart and Cusanus respectively thematize the phenomenon of the divine gift.¹³⁶ He argues that both thinkers not only take up this theme repeatedly, but also develop their entire thought as a philosophy of the gift. In the case of Meister Eckhart, Thurner focuses in particular on the gift as the event of the birth of God in the soul. In the case of Cusanus, he focuses on the idea of the divine gift as the presupposition for knowledge of God in the human intellect. For Eckhart, God's gift of God's self in the birth of the Word in the soul is a necessary consequence of God's nature. Cusanus does not think of the gift so radically. For Cusanus, the necessity of God's gift, as the precondition for human knowledge of God, is conditioned. This leads to differences in gratitude for the divine gift. For Eckhart, the fact of giving is determined by God's nature so, unlike Cusanus, he does not think we should be primarily thankful for God's *acts* of giving, but rather for the inner necessity of God's nature. For Eckhart, perfect detachment can "force" or "command" God to enter the human soul. Cusanus does not follow Eckhart here. For Cusanus, we must trust in the certainty of God's gifts as an act of faith. This different interpretation of the certainty of the gift leads to an emphasis on different virtues: for Cusanus, faith, hope, and love; and for Eckhart, poverty, humility, detachment, and *Gelassenheit* (letting go). Eckhart views the created world not only as a gift of God, but also as a hindrance for the gift of the divine birth. This leads, according to Thurner, to a marked disinterest in the historical Incarnation of Christ and salvation history in general. Cusanus, in contrast, speaks of the threefold nature of God's gifts: the created world, intellectual illumination, and the concrete history of divine revelation. Like Eckhart, Cusanus holds that God gives himself in human intellect as Truth and the exemplar of all things. But because of the finitude of human intellect the absolute Truth of all beings is present only potentially. It is the seed that can grow only if it falls upon fertile soil (the world) and is cultivated by proven rules (transmitted in the revelation tradition).

¹³⁵ Martin Thurner, "Die Philosophie der Gabe bei Meister Eckhart und Nikolaus Cusanus," in *Nicolaus Cusanus zwischen Deutschland und Italien*, ed. Martin Thurner, Veröffentlichungen des Grabmann-Institutes zur Erforschung der mittelalterlichen Theologie und Philosophie 48 (Berlin: 2002), 153–84.

¹³⁶ "Omne datum optimum et omne donum perfectum de sursum est, descendens a patre luminum." (James 1:17).

Finally, Klaus Reinhart,¹³⁷ Isabelle Mandrella,¹³⁸ and Harald Schwaetzer¹³⁹ have all contributed articles that deal with the theme of the birth of God in the soul in Meister Eckhart and Nicholas of Cusa.¹⁴⁰ Klaus Reinhart explores the theme of the birth of God in the soul (*Gottesgeburt*) and divine sonship (*Gotteskindschaft*) in Cusanus's sermons and indicates possible connections to Eckhart.¹⁴¹ In his early sermons (1430–44) Cusanus took up the theme in the context of the traditional teaching of the threefold divine birth: the inner-Trinitarian generation of the Son from the Father, the historical Incarnation of Christ, and the spiritual birth in the hearts of believers who become children of God through grace. In these early sermons Cusanus does not draw on Eckhart's teaching that there is only one, eternal, birth. Rudolf Haubst had interpreted this as a critical distancing from Eckhart, and a correction of Eckhart's teachings.¹⁴² Reinhart suggests the possibility that Cusanus had simply taken the traditional teaching as his own. In any case, after 1444 Cusanus no longer makes use of the traditional teaching of the threefold birth. Reinhart speculates that this turn

¹³⁷ Klaus Reinhart, "Das Thema der Gottesgeburt und der Gotteskindschaft in den Predigten des Nikolaus von Kues," in *Nikolaus von Kues als Prediger*, ed. Klaus Reinhart and Harald Schwaetzer, Philosophie interdisziplinär 11 (Regensburg: 2004), 61–78. See the French version of this article: Klaus Reinhart, "L'idée de naissance de Dieu dans l'âme chez Nicolas de Cues et l'influence d'Eckhart," in *La naissance de Dieu dans l'âme chez Eckhart et Nicolas de Cues* (Patrimoines christianisme), ed. Marie-Anne Vannier (Paris: 2006), 85–99.

¹³⁸ Isabelle Mandrella, "La liberté de la volonté d'après Eckhart et Nicolas de Cues," in *La naissance de Dieu dans l'âme chez Eckhart et Nicolas de Cues* (Patrimoines christianisme), ed. Marie-Anne Vannier (Paris: 2006), 121–36.

¹³⁹ Harald Schwaetzer, "L'importance d'Eckhart dans la genèse du concept de *filiatio Dei*," in *La naissance de Dieu dans l'âme chez Eckhart et Nicolas de Cues* (Patrimoines christianisme), ed. Marie-Anne Vannier (Paris: 2006), 101–20.

¹⁴⁰ To mark the occasion of the authentication and publication of Eckhart's German Sermons 101–04 in the critical edition (DW IV, 1)—sermons which deal extensively with the birth of the Word in the soul—l'Équipe de recherche sur les mystiques rhénans du Centre de recherche Pensée chrétienne (EA 3475) of the University of Metz organized a colloquium in concert with the Institut für Cusanus-Forschung at the University of Trier in April 2004. The papers were subsequently published in *La naissance de Dieu dans l'âme chez Eckhart et Nicolas de Cues* (Patrimoines christianisme), ed. Marie-Anne Vannier (Paris: 2006). It contains essays on the topic in Eckhart, Cusanus, Gueric d'Igny, Tauler, and Michel Henry.

¹⁴¹ As Reinhart acknowledges, Eckhart develops his teachings concerning the birth of the Word in the soul primarily (though not exclusively) in his German sermons, so that the question of Cusanus's familiarity with Eckhart's German writings is closely tied to the question of the possible extent of his influence on Cusanus in this context. See also Steer, "Die Predigten," 163–64.

¹⁴² See Haubst, *Die Christologie des Nikolaus von Kues*, 36–37. Cited by Reinhart, "Gottesgeburt und Gotteskindschaft," 64.

may well be evidence of a later Eckhartian influence, in particular from the *Commentary on John*, where the theme of spiritual birth is developed without recourse to the schema of the threefold birth.¹⁴³ Cusanus develops the concept of *christiformitas*, which becomes a synonym for *filius dei*. Whoever wants to become a son of God must conform himself to Christ in faith and in life. The idea of *christiformitas* accomplishes two tasks according to Reinhart: On the one hand, the divine sonship of all human beings can only be thought of as assimilation to the divine Sonship of Christ, so that the two become almost identical. On this point Reinhart thinks we may indeed detect the influence of Eckhart. On the other hand, the concept of *christiformitas* also maintains that in the process of assimilation the individuality and freedom of the individual are preserved.¹⁴⁴

Mandrella investigates Eckhart's and Cusanus's understanding of the relationship between freedom of the will and the birth of God in the soul. Mandrella looks first at Cusanus, then at Eckhart, and finally at the two in comparison. She leaves aside Cusanus's well-known discussion of freedom in *De visione dei* and focuses instead on Cusanus's sermons. She examines sermons in which Cusanus develops a conception of the human being as free, creative, and dynamic, capable of choosing (indeed obliged to choose) for oneself one's own disposition. Still, the choice of disposition is tied to obedience to God. The content of this obedience is not strictly defined, but corresponds to a process of filiation, whereby one comes to understand oneself as a living image of God, seeking God in oneself, and conforming oneself to the divine will. Since it is unclear whether or not Cusanus was familiar with Eckhart's German writings, Mandrella confines her discussion of Eckhart to his Latin works. She focuses in on the theme of the death of one's own will in the process of filiation. Divine filiation presupposes emptying oneself of whatever is proper to the self—as distinct from God—including the desire for “this or that;” that is, it presupposes the death of one's own will. True freedom consists in living life without a why. Mandrella then turns to a comparison of Eckhart and Cusanus. She focuses on Cusanus's 1455 Sermon CLXXXV, which takes up the theme of the death of one's own particular will. Like Eckhart, Cusanus describes the *propria voluntas*, which is directed towards this and that. Only the

¹⁴³ Reinhart, “Gottesgeburt und Gotteskindschaft,” 70. See also Rudolf Haubst, *Die Christologie*, 38.

¹⁴⁴ See also Rudolf Haubst, “Die geistliche Geburt des Sohnes Gottes in den Herzen und das erlösende Todesleiden Jesu,” in *Streifzüge in die cusanische Theologie*, ed. Rudolf Haubst (Münster: 1991), 402–29, especially 414.

death of this false liberty renders participation in God possible and allows God's Word to live in us. She notes that Cusanus emphasizes both the essential role of Christ and humble obedience more strongly than Eckhart had, perhaps because Cusanus is so keen to underscore that human beings are incapable of conforming themselves to God on their own, but need Christ as example and mediator.¹⁴⁵ She also notes that, in distinction from Eckhart, Cusanus seems here to prioritize the contemplative life as a life lived in greater conformity to God. Nevertheless, she concludes, both Eckhart and Cusanus share a conception of freedom of the will in terms of the free disposition of oneself in the process of divine filiation. "The classic conflict between divine and human freedom loses its relevance, because we are dealing here with the birth of God in the human soul and so with a mystical coincidence of the divine and human wills in which the freedom of the human will finds its true realization."¹⁴⁶

Schwaetzer examines the influence of Eckhart on Cusanus's conception of filiation in *De filiatione dei*. Schwaetzer argues that Cusanus's conception of the birth of God in the soul, *filiatione*, is inseparably tied to his understanding of the human being as a *viva similitudo*, or *viva imago Dei*. Schwaetzer argues that Cusanus develops this understanding from his reading of Eckhart, who uses the same terminology and conceptual scheme. Further, at the time of the composition of *De filiatione dei*, 1445, Cusanus had just acquired Codex Cusanus 21 (1444). During this period, Cusanus was not only occupied with his study of Eckhart, but had also been recently confronted by Wenck's accusations (1442) that in *De docta ignorantia* he, like Eckhart, had conflated God and creature, man and Christ. Schwaetzer argues that we can read *De filiatione dei* as an attempt to work out a conception of divinization that avoids such conflation. Schwaetzer views *De dato patris lumine* as a precursor text in this regard. In it, Cusanus argues that God, the giver of all good things, can only give the best, which means in some fashion he must give himself to all creatures. He uses the metaphor of the mirror to illustrate: just as the same face is reflected in different ways in different mirrors (some more clearly, some more obscurely, but in none perfectly), so also is the Creator imaged in his creation. Only in Christ is the image perfect, for this "mirror" is without blemish.¹⁴⁷ In *De filiatione dei* Cusanus adopts Eckhart's conception of

¹⁴⁵ Mandrella also notes the context of this emphasis on obedience. Cusanus is reminding his assemblage of the three ecclesiastic vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

¹⁴⁶ Mandrella, "La liberté de la volonté," 135.

¹⁴⁷ Schwaetzer, "L'importance d'Eckhart," 114–15.

man as a living image of God. In the third chapter he returns to and elaborates on the mirror metaphor. Only the Divine Logos is a perfect mirror, the perfect image of unity. Around this perfect mirror are other imperfect mirrors, differently curved and dull. These mirrors reflect the central, perfect mirror. They symbolize creatures. Among them are mirrors that are capable of curving, straightening, and cleaning themselves. These are the human beings. They are living mirrors, intellectual and free, which reflect the being of the perfect mirror.¹⁴⁸ In *De filiatione dei* Cusanus thus manages to fundamentally separate creature and Creator by the fact that we are dealing with an image reflected imperfectly, but he is still able to distinguish the human being from all the other creatures by understanding man as a living image of God, capable of ceaselessly perfecting his own image. Using this dynamic on the model of Eckhart, Cusanus is able to preserve the necessary difference between creature and Creator, while at the same time preserving Eckhart's radical valorization of the human capacity for equality—not identity—with Christ.

¹⁴⁸ Schwaetzer, "L'importance d'Eckhart," 109.

ON A DANGEROUS TRAIL:
HENRY SUSO AND THE CONDEMNATIONS OF MEISTER ECKHART

Fiorella Retucci

On 27 October 1329, a papal bull condemned 28 sentences drawn from Meister Eckhart's Latin and German works. Among these, 17 were judged to be heretical,¹ while 11 were thought to be rash and suspect.² The condemnation did not directly touch the person of the Meister, who had died about two years before, but it was a clear attempt to stop his doctrines from spreading. The papal bull actually forbade the diffusion or defense of the condemned doctrines. The serious risk involved in defending Eckhart's condemned theses was the charge of heresy: "If anyone should presume to defend or approve the same articles in an obstinate manner, we desire and order a process of heresy against those who would so defend or approve the fifteen articles and the two last, or any of them, as well as a process of suspicion of heresy against those who would defend or approve the other eleven articles according to their literal sense."³

In 1961, Joseph Koch made one of his most important achievements in demonstrating⁴ that Eckhart's works experienced a wide diffusion after the 1329 condemnation. The pope's prohibition was indeed largely disregarded within and outside the Dominican order: John of Dambach, Henry Suso, William Iordan, Marquard of Lindau, and Jordan of Quedlinburg are

¹ Meister Eckhart, *Acta Echardiana, II. Processus contra mag. Echardum*, n. 65, ed. L. Sturlese (Stuttgart: 2006), 600, 106–07: "quindecim primos articulos et duos alios ultimos tamquam hereticos..."

² *Acta Echardiana*, n. 65, 600, 107–08: "dictos vero alios undecim tamquam male sonantes, temerarios et suspectos de heresi..."

³ *Acta Echardiana*, n. 65, 600, 111–15: "Si vero eosdem articulos pertinaciter defendere vel approbare presumpserint, contra illos, qui predictos quindecim articulos et duos alios ultimos seu eorum aliquem sic defenderint aut approvaverint tanquam contra hereticos, adversus vero eos, qui alios dictos undecim articulos, prout sonant verba eorum, defenderint aut approbaverint, velut contra suspectos de heresi procedi volumus et mandamus."

⁴ J. Koch, "Meister Eckharts Weiterwirken im deutsch-niederländischen Raum im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert," in *La Mystique Rhénane. Colloque de Strasbourg 16–19 mai 1961* (Paris: 1963), 133–56; reprint in J. Koch, *Kleine Schriften 1* (Rome: 1973), 429–55. In the same direction, with the addition of new literature and analyses of new sources and manuscripts, see L. Sturlese, "Meister Eckharts Weiterwirken. Versuch einer Bilanz," in *Eckardus Theutonicus, homo doctus et sanctus, Nachweise und Berichte zum Prozess gegen Meister Eckhart*, ed. H. Stirnimann and R. Imbach, *Dokimion 11* (Fribourg: 1992), 169–83.

just a few examples of people who were using Eckhart's texts in apparent contempt of the papal bull.

In this chapter I examine a particular case, that of the little *Book of the Truth*,⁵ written by the German Dominican Henry Suso, who was probably Eckhart's student in the years immediately before the beginning of Eckhart's trial process in Cologne, that is, prior to 1326.⁶

Koch was convinced that we should read this book as the "Methode der indirekten Verteidigung Eckharts,"⁷ a means to indirectly defend Eckhart's doctrines. Indeed, in this work we already recognize the strong influence of the Master. And this is exactly the problem in this work: how was it possible for Suso, a mystic Dominican friar, who was venerated by many in his order shortly after his death and confirmed as blessed by Pope Gregory XVI in 1831, to defend doctrines that were condemned as heretical by a papal bull?

The answer of scholars to this question has been strongly influenced by the conclusion of Denifle: "Suso had also made it clear that it was in fact impossible to defend Eckhart in all of his theses."⁸ Suso was, in Denifle's

⁵ Heinrich Seuse, *Deutsche Schriften*. Im Auftrag der Württembergischen Kommission für Landesgeschichte, ed. K. Bihlmeyer (Stuttgart: 1907; repr. facs. Frankfurt am Main: 1961), 326–59. I am using here the more recent critical edition: Heinrich Seuse, *Das Buch der Wahrheit*, ed. L. Sturlese and R. Blumrich, Philosophische Bibliothek 458 (Hamburg: 1993), which also uses a chapter's numeration and a text's division quite differently from Bihlmeyer's (see the *Prolegomena* to the edition, LXVI). For the English translation, see Henry Suso, *The Exemplar with Two German Sermons*, ed. F. Tobin (New York: 1989).

⁶ We have little biographical information about Suso's life. His name is never mentioned in official documents and his historical figure as a student at Cologne's Dominican school is also left out in the reconstruction of G.M. Löhr, *Die kölnen Dominikanerschule vom 14. bis zum 16. Jahrhundert, mit einer Übersicht über die Gesamtentwicklung* (Fribourg: 1946). L. Sturlese, "Einleitung" (see note 1 above) lxxv, holds that two details about his life have scholarly justification: the composition of the *Horologium Sapientiae* in 1134–1339 (see also P. Künzle, "Einführung" in Heinrich Seuse, *Horologium Sapientiae*, ed. P. Künzle, *Spicilegium Friburgense* 23 [Fribourg: 1977], 19–22), and his death on 25 January 1366 (on this, see also W. Muschg, *Die Mystik in der Schweiz*, Frauenfeld-Leipzig 1935, 242–79 and K. Bihlmeyer, "Einleitung" [note 5 above], 136–37). More information about his life, according to Sturlese, can be drawn from Suso's own indications in his autobiography. A recent essay by S. Altmann and H.J. Ziegeler, "Von diener der ewigen weisheit zum Autor Heinrich Seuse. Autorschaft und Medienwandel in den illustrierten Handschriften und Drucken von Heinrich Seuses 'Exemplar,'" in *Text und Kultur. Mittelalterliche Literatur 1150–1450*, ed. U. Peters, Germanistische Symposien Berichtsbände 23 (Stuttgart-Weimar: 2001), 150–81, considers all information about Suso's life as literary fictions that have no historical basis.

⁷ J. Koch, "Meister Eckharts Weiterwirken," 439.

⁸ H.S. Denifle, *Die Schriften des Seligen Heinrich Seuse aus dem Predigerorden*, ed. P. fr. H.S. Denifle, 1. Bd., *Deutsche Schriften* (Munich: 1876), 564f. n. 4: "Seuse hat also klar dargethan, das es in der That unmöglich sey, Eckhart zu vertheidigen." (Suso has also made clear that it was in fact no longer possible to defend Eckhart.)

interpretation, aware of the impossibility of defending Eckhart's thought on every level.

For a long time this was a common position of scholars, which remained the case even after the influence of Eckhart's doctrines on Suso's work was definitively proven in the very well-documented research by H. Piesch.⁹ The conclusion remained the same: "Nach 1329 aber, d.h. nach der Veröffentlichung der Bulle *In agro dominico*, hätte es Seuse kaum mehr wagen können, das BdW zu schreiben."¹⁰ (However, after 1329, that is, after the publication of the Bull *In the Field of the Lord*, Suso could no longer dare to write the BdW.)

The meaning of such conclusions is the following: confronted with the papal condemnation of Eckhart's views, Suso could not afford to attempt an explicit defense of Eckhart. Since Suso, in his *Book of the Truth*, is clearly quoting and defending his teacher's doctrines, we must date the work to a period before Eckhart's condemnation, while neglecting at the same time a real fact: in other works Suso described Meister Eckhart as blessed and a saint (*seliger* or *heiliger Meister*)¹¹—and this certainly happened after Eckhart's condemnation.¹²

⁹ H. Piesch, "Seuses 'Büchlein der Wahrheit' und Meister Eckhart," in *Heinrich Seuse. Studien zum 600. Todestag 1366–1966*, ed. E.M. Filthaut (Köln: 1966), 91–133. Piesch describes the *Little Book of the Truth* as "eine bewußte und gewollte, getreue Wiedergabe der mystischen Vollkommenheitslehre Meister Eckhart" (see 133).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 93, n. 6. In this direction see also the conclusions of P. Künzle, *Einführung*, 32: "bei Seuses kirchlicher Gesinnung ist nicht anzunehmen, er hätte sich erlaubt, den eckhartschen Sätzen nach ihrer Verwerfung einen orthodoxen Sinn zu geben" and W. Trusen, *Der Prozeß gegen Meister Eckhart. Vorgeschichte, Verlauf und Folgen* (Paderborn: 1988), 134–63, see 154: "Es ist kaum anzunehmen, daß er nach der Verurteilung in dieser Form öffentlich agiert und sich somit bewußt dem Häresieverdacht ausgesetzt hätte."

¹¹ See Heinrich Seuse, *Leben*, ch. 6, ed. Bihlmeyer, 22, 28: "der selig meister Eghart . . .," *ibid.*, ch. 21, 63, 4: "dem heiligen meister Egghart . . .," *ibid.*, 23, 99, 13: "dez heiligen maister Eghards . . ." and 99, 14: "dez hohen meisters . . ."

¹² In the 6th chapter of his *Life* (see Bihlmeyer, 22, 27–23, 12), Suso refers to a vision in which the deceased Eckhart describes the state of the extraordinary radiance of his divinized soul ("Von dem meister ward er bewiset, daz er waz in überswenker gûnlich, in die sin sele blos vergoetet waz in gote"). E. Colledge, see his "Introduction" to *Meister Eckhart. The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises and Defense*, ed. E. Colledge and B. McGinn (New York: 1981), 18–19, is convinced that here Suso is not referring to Meister Eckhart, the friar who was condemned for heresy, but to another Eckhart, known as Eckhart the younger, who was definitor at the general chapter held in 1337 at Valenciennes. Colledge concludes: "Thus, Suso has been shown to have defended his teacher's good name; but he did not beatify him." The only evidence Colledge puts on the table is to be found in the catalogue of Dominican writers (Quétif-Echard, *Scriptores ordinis Praedicatorum*, vol. 1 [Paris: 1719–21], 593a), where, for the first time, the protagonist of Suso's vision is historically identified with F. Aicardus Saxo. It is important to note here, firstly, that the source of Quétif-Echard is the work *De viribus illustribus ordinis praedicatorum* (Paris: 1517), 223, written

A very important step forward in the interpretation of Suso's *Book of the Truth* was that of Sturlese in his introduction to the work.¹³ Sturlese's results can be summarized as follows:

1. Suso quotes the text of the papal bull directly and literally, at least in the seventh chapter of the work. The *Book of the Truth* was surely written after Eckhart's condemnation.
2. In the whole work, Suso explicitly defended Eckhart and his doctrines. The *Book of the Truth* was an open answer to the condemnation and to the papal bull.
3. Suso was spreading Eckhart's doctrines in conscious contempt of the papal prohibition.

There are three completely different directions in terms of the interpretation of Suso's work by scholars:

1. A first interpretation that attempts to remove Suso away from Eckhart's influence (such as that of Denifle).
2. A second interpretation that does not deny this deep influence but rather affirms it, yet in such a way that the figure of Suso remained untouched. This view argues that, writing his work before Eckhart's condemnation, Suso was not aware of the danger of Eckhart's doctrines (Piesch and Trusen);¹⁴
3. A third and recent interpretation which proves that Suso, in writing his work, was not only quoting his teacher's doctrines, but was also replying to the condemnation itself (Sturlese following an indication of J. Koch).¹⁵

by the Tuscan Dominican Leander Alberti, who referred to an "Echardus Teutonicus (and not Saxi!)", *sacrae theologiae doctor*" as the protagonist of Suso's vision. It is remarkable, secondly, that the hagiographical tradition, which gives an account of Eckhart's (senior!) holiness as testified by his disciple's vision, is a very ancient and old one: on this see I. Degenhardt, *Studien zum Wandel des Eckhartbildes*, (Studien zur Problemgeschichte der Antiken und mittelalterlichen Philosophie) VI. 3 (Leiden: 1967), especially 73–75.

¹³ L. Sturlese, "Einleitung," in Heinrich Seuse, *Das Buch der Wahrheit*, ix–lxiii; see also L. Sturlese, "Heinrich Seuses 'Buch der Wahrheit.' Versuch einer 'vernünftigen' Interpretation," in Sturlese, *Homo divinus. Philosophische Projekte in Deutschland zwischen Meister Eckhart und Heinrich Seuse* (Stuttgart: 2007), 199–230.

¹⁴ W. Trusen, *Der Prozeß*.

¹⁵ J. Koch, "Meister Eckharts Weiterwirken," 439: "Er (*scil.* Heinrich Seuse) ist der erste und vor Nikolaus von Kues der einzige, der es in seinem ersten Werk, dem Büchlein der Wahrheit, in dem bekannten Zwiegespräch mit dem Wilden wagt, seinen hohen Meister bezüglich mehrerer Artikel zu verteidigen."

The analysis that follows focuses on three different problems posed by this work. The first one is to see how Suso answered the papal bull. The second point is to clarify how Suso attempted his defense. In this sense we will try to answer the following questions: does Suso really defend Eckhart? Or, in other words, by defending the teacher is Suso really and faithfully referring to Eckhart's doctrine? If we read Suso's work, do we find a faithful exposition of Eckhart's doctrine? The third point is to determine the historical and doctrinal value of this work.

1. To begin with the first problem, if we take a deep look at the work, we can readily see that the whole *Book of the Truth* contains references to many articles condemned in the bull. In his work Suso deals with at least 14 of the articles condemned by the pope. He devotes himself to discussing several of Eckhart's doctrines that were deeply involved in the condemnation, as we can see in the table below.

<i>In agro dominico</i>	Heinrich Seuse, <i>Das Buch der Wahrheit</i>
Art. 28, Acta Echardiana, n.65, 599, 93–94	Ch. 2, 6, 10–8, 32 and Ch. 6, 36, 137–61. ¹⁶
Art. 23, Acta Echardiana, n. 65, 599, 75–79	Ch. 3, 8, 3–12, 51
Art. 24, Acta Echardiana, n. 65, 599, 80–82	
Art. 1, Acta Echardiana, n. 65, 597, 22–25	Ch. 4, 12, 3–14, 42
Art. 2, Acta Echardiana, n. 65, 597, 26	
Art. 3, Acta Echardiana, n. 65, 598, 27–28	
Art. 10, Acta Echardiana, n. 65, 598, 43–46	Ch. 5, 16, 3–18, 51
Art. 11, Acta Echardiana, n. 5, 598, 47–49	Ch. 7, 62, 64–96, 130
Art. 12, Acta Echardiana, n. 65, 598, 50–51	

¹⁶ "Aber daz diz niht sie selb dú vernunft oder wesen oder niessen, daz ist och wol war nach dem, als man úns dar us reden mag. Es ist aber nach warheit dez selben als verer und verer, denn der einer finen berlen sprechi ein hakbank" (Heinrich Seuse, *Das Buch der Wahrheit*, 36, 157–61). Suso's allusive speaking of the pearl and the chopping block in reference to God's innominability seems to be very near to Eckhart's assertion condemned by the 28th article of the bull: "Quod deus non est bonus neque melior neque optimus. Ita male dico, quandoque voco deum bonum, ac si ego album vocarem nigrum" (*Acta Echardiana*, n. 65, 599, 93–94). See also F. Tobin, "Coming to Terms With Meister Eckhart: Suso's 'Büchlein der Wahrheit,'" in *Semper idem et novus. Festschrift for Frank Banta*, ed. F.G. Getry, Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik 481 (Göppingen: 1988), 321–44, see 344 note 26.

Table (cont.)

<i>In agro dominico</i>	Heinrich Seuse, <i>Das Buch der Wahrheit</i>
Art. 13, Acta Echardiana, n. 65, 598, 52–55	
Art. 20, Acta Echardiana, n. 65, 599, 68	
Art. 21, Acta Echardiana, n. 65, 599, 70–71	
Art. 22, Acta Echardiana, n. 65, 599, 72–74	
Art. 27, Acta Echardiana, n. 65, 599, 91–92	Ch. 6, 40, 221–42, 232

References to other articles are also made in the final chapter where Suso discusses the role of external actions and behaviors:

<i>In agro dominico</i>	Heinrich Seuse, <i>Das Buch der Wahrheit</i>
Art. 8, Acta Echardiana, n. 65, 598, 36–38	Ch. 8, 66, 3–70, 79
Art. 16, Acta Echardiana, n. 65, 598, 62	
Art. 17, Acta Echardiana, n. 65, 598, 63–64	
Art. 18, Acta Echardiana, n. 65, 599, 65–67	
Art. 19, Acta Echardiana, n. 65, 599, 68	

As the table above shows, Suso's open reference to the text of the papal bull is not a sporadic, isolated case, discoverable only in the seventh chapter, which has for a long period been considered as a part of the work written later than the others and joined to the other chapters in a subsequent revision of the text.¹⁷ The papal bull is a constant reference for Suso, from which he departs when discussing Eckhart's most controversial doctrinal positions.

¹⁷ See A. Pummerer, *Seuses BÜchlein der Wahrheit nach formalen Gesichtspunkten betrachtet*. (Gymnasium Mariaschein, 1908), 29 and 31; W. Trusen, *Der Prozeß*, 136ff. On the contrary, see K. Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, 3 (Munich: 1996), 423–24, proving the internal coherence between the 7th chapter and the other parts of the book. For Ruh (who contests, on this point, Sturlese, "Einleitung," xxii) it is possible to identify two different redactional phases on the *Little Book of the Truth* by Suso. To the first original text belong chapters I–IV and VI of Bilmehyer's edition (I–V and VII of Sturlese–Blumrich's edition). To a second revisional phase are imputable chapter titles and some biographical information. The datation accepted by Ruh is 1329–30, i.e. after Eckhart's condemnation (1329) and before the general chapter of the Dominican order in Maastricht (1330). See also, K. Ruh, "Eine kritische Beobachtung zu Seuse 'Büchlein der Wahrheit,'" in *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 124 (1995), 72–75.

The problem now is to fix in which sense Suso proceeds in his “defense of Eckhart.”

2. The open goal of the *Little Book of the Truth* is to submit those doctrinal statements, which are apparently dangerous, to the authoritative doctrinal interpretation of the church, as Suso openly declares on many occasions.¹⁸ This is evident from the first chapter, in which Suso outlines the object and the purpose of his work:

Also kam er darzû, daz er wart gewarnet und wart ime fûr geworfen, daz in dem schine des selben bildes verborgen legi valscher grunt ungeorderter friheit und bedeket legi grozer schade der heiligen kristenheit. . . . Und also meinde es, daz guetû vernunftigû bilde nût werin ze verwerfenne, dú ir klaren vernunftikeit underwürfliche haltent nach meinunge der heiligen kristenheit, noch vernunftig sinne, die gût warheit inne tragent eins dur-nechtigen lebennes, werin ze schühenne.¹⁹

Here, under the representation of a personal crisis,²⁰ Suso is affirming that some doctrines (for example, Eckhart's) are not dangerous insofar as they are submitted to the opinion of the holy church.

The questions and objections posed by the disciple, too, force the Truth to answer in complete harmony with the common position of the church.

“I would like to understand this better from the Truth of the Literature:”²¹ this is just an example of the role played by the disciple, constantly inviting the Truth to verify Eckhart's doctrine, comparing it with those one of the “most learned and experienced human beings, to whom God has revealed his hidden wisdom.”²² This means that, according to Suso, defending Eckhart is the same as showing in which sense his doctrines are susceptible of an orthodox reading. The question thus arises: how is this possible? How does Suso realize his program? The answer to this question can be found by examining in detail three particular cases in which Suso attempts his teacher's defense.

¹⁸ See, for example, the closing passage of the first chapter of the *Little Book of the Truth*: “He was first directed to the core of Holy Scripture out of which eternal Truth speaks . . .” (Henry Suso, *The Exemplar*, 308) or Suso's constant reference to the biblical text as authoritative legitimation of his thought (see Henry Suso, *The Exemplar*, 314, 317).

¹⁹ See Heinrich Seuse, *Das Buch der Wahrheit*, 2, 19–23 and 4, 37–41.

²⁰ See H. Piesch, “Suses ‘Büchlein der Wahrheit,’” 91–92.

²¹ Henry Suso, *The Exemplar*, 322.

²² Henry Suso, *The Exemplar*, 308. See also 319, 321, 325.

2.1. The first case concerns Eckhart's Trinitarian doctrine, which was involved in articles 23²³ and 24.²⁴ The danger suggested by these articles was very great: falling into the Sabellian heresy by denying the distinction between the persons of the Trinity.²⁵

Suso deals with this problem in the third chapter of his *Little Book of the Truth*: *Dú Warheit antwürt und sprach: Disú menigheit ellú ist mit dem grunde und in dem bodme ein einveltigú einikeit. . . . Entwürt der Warheit: Ich heisse den grund den usqual und den ursprung, us dem die usflüsse entspringent. . . . Daz ist dú natur und daz wesen der gotheit. Und in disem grundelosen abgründe siget dú driheit der personen in ire einikeit, und ellú mengi wirt da ir selbs entsetzet in etlicher wise. . . . Wan in der goetlichen nature ist nit anders denne wesen und die widertragenden eigenschefte, und die legent úberal nihtes nit zú dem wesenne, sú sint es alzemale, wie sú underscheit haben gegen dem sú sint, daz ist gegen ir gegenwurfe.*²⁶

In the limitless abyss of the Godhead, the Trinity of persons sinks into its oneness and in a certain sense all multiplicity becomes lost. In the divine nature there is namely nothing, but being and the concomitant relations,²⁷ which add nothing to being. They are completely the same although they

²³ See *Acta Echardiana*, n. 65, 599, 75–79: “Vicesimustertius articulus: Deus est unus omnibus modis et secundum omnem rationem, ita ut in ipso non sit invenire aliquam multitudinem in intellectu vel extra intellectum. Qui enim duo videt vel distinctionem videt, deum non videt. Deus enim unus est extra numerum et supra numerum, nec ponit in unum cum aliquo. Sequitur: Nulla igitur distinctio in ipso deo esse potest aut intelligi.”

²⁴ See *Acta Echardiana*, n. 65, 599, 80–82: “Vicesimusquartus articulus: ‘Omnis distinctio es a deo aliena, neque in natura neque in personis.’ Probatur: quia ‘natura ipsa est una et hoc unum, et quaelibet persona est una et id ipsum unum quod natura.’”

²⁵ See “Votum Avenionense,” in *Acta Echardiana*, n. 59, 586–87, esp. 587, 17–23: “Licet enim natura in se nullam realem distinctionem et quaelibet persona in se sit realiter indistincta, tamen non debet negari omnis distinctio in personis qua una distinguitur ab alia ut sit distinctio in personis, ne incidamus in haeresim Sabellii, in qua videtur declinare ratio posita in articulo, qua sic probat: ‘natura est una et quaelibet persona est una et illud ipsum quod natura.’ Igitur sicut in natura nulla est distinctio secundum quam sint plures naturae, sic nec in personis nulla est distinctio, ut sint plures personae. Quod est haereticum dogma Sabellii.”

²⁶ Heinrich Seuse, *Das Buch der Wahrheit*, 10, 13–12, 45.

²⁷ I prefer here to translate the Middle High German “eigenschefte” with “relations” and not with “qualities,” as Tobin does. Here Suso is speaking about the essence of God and the relations of the persons (*essentia* and *relationes*). My choice is here supported not only by the modern German translation (Heinrich Seuse, *Das Buch der Wahrheit*, ed. Blumrich and Sturlese, 13: “Denn in der göttlichen Natur ist nichts anderes als ihr *Wesen* und die *Relationen* . . .,” but also by an older English translation (Henry Suso, *Little Book of Eternal Wisdom and The Little Book of the Truth*, ed. J.M. Clark [London: 1953], 179): “For in the Divine Nature there is nothing but *essence* and reciprocal *relations*.”

are differentiated from each other with respect to that in which they exist, namely, in their object.²⁸

The silent source, still unidentified, of this central passage is taken from Aquinas's *Summa theologiae*:

But as it was shown above (q. XXVIII, A. 2) in creatures relations are accidental, while in God they are the divine essence itself. From this it follows that in God essence is not really distinct from person, and yet that the persons are really distinguished from each other. For persons, as stated above (q. XXIX, A. 4) signifies relation as subsisting in the divine nature. But relation as referred to the essence does not differ from it really, but only in our way of thinking, while as referred to an opposite relation, it has a real distinction by virtue of that opposition. Thus there are one essence and three persons.²⁹

2.2. A second important example concerns the relationship between God and human beings and the consequent doctrine of Christ as mediator in the achievement of the beatitude, which was involved in at least 7 articles of the papal bull (articles 10–13 and 20–22).³⁰ This doctrine is not a marginal one. In Eckhart's Christology we find the premises of some of his strongest theses, such as that of the essential dependence and the essential unity between God and human beings. In Eckhart's interpretation, the univocity of the human nature which Christ assumes and a human being possesses means that all the properties of Christ have been given also to human beings. Eckhart often repeated this thesis at the Court of the Inquisition.³¹

²⁸ Henry Suso, *The Exemplar*, 310.

²⁹ See Thomas de Aquino, *Summa theologiae*, 1, 39, a.1: "Sed, sicut supra ostensum est, sicut relationes in rebus creatis accidentaliter insunt, ita in Deo sunt ipsa essentia divina. Ex quo sequitur quod in Deo non sit aliud essentia quam persona secundum rem; et tamen quod personae realiter ab invicem distinguantur. Persona enim, ut dictum est supra, significat relationem, prout est subsistens in natura divina. Relatio autem, ad essentiam comparata, non differt re, sed ratione tantum, comparata autem ad oppositam relationem, habet, virtute oppositionis, realem distinctionem. Et sic remanet una essentia, et tres personae."

³⁰ See *Acta Echardiana*, n. 65, 598, 43–55 and 599, 69–74.

³¹ See Proc. Col. II, n. 65, in *Acta Echardiana*, n. 48, 333, 8–15 ("Patet ergo manifeste omne quod in praemissis quattuor articulis dicitur, scilicet quod humanam naturam assumpsit verbum ex intentione prima, hanc tamen naturam, scilicet in Christo, propter totam speciem humanam. Assumendo igitur ipsam naturam in ipso et per ipsum contulit gratiam filiationis et adoptionis omnibus hominibus, mihi, tibi et cuilibet participantibus univoce et aequaliter ipsam naturam, secundum illud: 'verbum caro factum est,' in Christo scilicet, 'et habitavit in nobis,' et prius ibidem: 'dedit eis potestatem filios dei fieri,' 'ut sit ipse primo genitus in multis fratribus,' Rom. 8"), and "Votum Avenionense" n. 85, in

The exact anthropological meaning of the Incarnation is, in Eckhart's interpretation, the following: through Christ and the Incarnation, God the Father gives us all the properties of his Son. The assimilation of the human being to the second person of the Trinity bears, furthermore, another consequence: like Christ, the human being has been created as *imago dei* and not just *ad imaginem dei*. This leads directly to the thesis of the co-essentiality of God and the human being.³²

Suso dedicates a very long part of his work to an explanation of this doctrine. To this problem are consecrated the whole of the fifth chapter and a large part of the seventh, where Suso, answering the objections of the Wild, speaks about the "Christlike person."³³

The results of his investigation are nevertheless very far from Eckhart's. Suso insists strongly on the differences between Christ and the human being, keeping himself away from the core of his teacher's doctrine.³⁴

A diligent examination of the *Book of the Truth* shows indeed that Suso, on this point, much as in others concerning Eckhart's doctrines involved in the condemnation, quotes literally from the authoritative doctrinal position of another major Dominican friar, Thomas Aquinas.

As we can see in the table below, Suso translates literally very long passages taken from the *Summa theologiae* into German.

Acta Echardiana, n. 59, 584, 12–15 ("Istum articulum dicit verum esse. Quem verificat, quia unumquodque quantum participat de natura alicuius, in tantum sibi competunt quae sunt illius, ut ignito competunt quae sunt ignis, ut calefacere et huiusmodi, et ecclesia legit de sanctis quae de sapientia increata et de deo scripta sunt").

³² See Meister Eckhart, *Expositio sancti Evangelii secundum Iohannem*, ed. K. Christ, B. Decker, J. Koch, H. Fischer, A. Zimmermann, and L. Sturlese, n. 23; LW III, 19, 5–6: "Imago enim in quantum imago est, nihil sui accipit a subiecto in quo est, sed totum suum esse accipit ab obiecto, cuius est imago." On this topic, see L. Sturlese, "Mystik und Philosophie in der Bildlehre Meister Eckharts. Eine Lektüre von Pred. 16a Quint," in *Homo divinus. Philosophische Projekte in Deutschland zwischen Meister Eckhart und Heinrich Seuse*, ed. L. Sturlese (Stuttgart: 2007), 47–60.

³³ Henry Suso, *The Exemplar*, 328f.

³⁴ This was also the conclusion of Sturlese, "Einleitung," xliii: "durch seine Betonung der Differenz zwischen dem Erstgeborenen und den Adoptierten zwar die Ideen Eckharts auf eine banalisierende Reflexionsebene hinabzog, aber daß er dies tat, um sich mit banalisierenden Interpretationen der Eckhartschen Lehre auseinanderzusetzen. Es handelt in erster Linie, wie ich glaube, um einen taktischen Zug, der dahin zielte, die Effekte der Verurteilungsbulle zu neutralisieren."

Heinrich Seuse, *Das Buch der Wahrheit*,
cit., 16, 7–18, 51

Thomas Aquinas,
Summa theologiae

Es ist ze wissenne, daz Christus, gottes sun, etwas gemein hatte mit allen menschen und hatte etwas sunders vor andren menschen. Daz, daz im gemein ist mit allen menschen, daz ist menschlichú nature, daz er öch ein warer mensch waz. *Er nam an sich menschlich nature und nit persone. Und daz ist in der wise ze nemenne, daz Christus menschlich natur an sich nam in einer unteilichi der materien, daz der lerer Damascenus heisset in athomo*, und also der angenommenen gemeinen menschlichen nature entwúrte daz rein blütli in der gesegneten Marien lib, da er liplich gezeow von nam.

Und darumbe so hat menschlichú nature an ir selben genomen kein solich recht, wan si Christus hatte angenommen und nit persone, daz ie der mensche darumbe súl und múg in der selben wise got und mensch sin. Er ist der allein, dem dú unerveolgklich wirdikeit zú geheort, daz er die nature an sich nam in der luterkeit, daz im nüt hat gevolget weder von der erbsünde, noch von keiner anderre sünde. Und darumb waz er der alleine, der daz verschulte menschlich künne erleosen mohte.

Daz ander: *Aller anderre menschen verdientú werk*, die sú tût in rehter gelazsenheit ir selbes, *die ordenent eigentlich den menschen zú der selikeit*, dú da ein lon ist der tugende. Und dú selikeit lit an der voller geotlicher gebruchunge, da alles mittel und anderheit ist abgeleit.

Aber dú einunge der infleischunge Christi, sit daz si ist in einem persoentlichen wesenne, so úberget si und ist heoher denne dú einunge des gemütes der seligen zú

Summa theol. III 4 2: Unde relinquitur quod nullo modo *filius Dei assumpsit humanam personam*. Ad primum ergo dicendum quod *naturam humanam assumpsit filius Dei in atomo*, . . . Unde non sequitur quod *persona sit assumpta*.

Summa theol. III 2 a.3: Ad tertium dicendum quod *Dei verbum non assumpsit naturam humanam in universali, sed in atomo*, idest in individuo, sicut Damascenus dicit, *alioquin oporteret quod cuilibet homini conveniret esse Dei verbum*, sicut convenit Christo.

Summa theol. III 2 11: *Sed neque etiam opera cuiuscumque alterius hominis potuerunt esse meritoria huius unionis ex condigno. Primo quidem, quia opera meritoria hominis proprie ordinantur ad beatitudinem, quae est virtutis praemium, et consistit in plena Dei fruitione.*

Unio autem incarnationis, cum sit in esse personali, transcendit unionem mentis beatae ad Deum, quae est per actum fruentis. . .

(cont.)

Heinrich Seuse, *Das Buch der Wahrheit*,
cit., 16, 7–18, 51

Thomas Aquinas,
Summa theologiae

gotte.³⁵ Wan von dem ersten beginne, do
er enphangen wart der mensch, do waz er
werliche gottes sun, also daz er enkein
ander selbstandunge hatte, denne gottes
sun.³⁶

Aber ellú andrú menschen die hant ir
natürlich understandunge in irem
natúrlichen wesenne, und wie genzklich
sú in selber iemer entgant ald wie
luterlich sú sich iemer gelazsent in der
warheit, so geschihet daz nit, daz sú in der
geotlichen persone understandunge iemer
übersetzt werden und die iren verlieren.

Daz dritte: *Dirre mensch Christus hatte
daz och für ellú menschen, daz er ist ein höbt
der kristenheit, nach glicher wise ze redenne
dez menschen höbtes gegen sinem libe.*³⁷ *Als
da stat geschriben, daz alle die, die er hat
fürsehen, die hat er vorbereitet, daz sú wúrdin
mitfoermig mit dem bilde des sunes gottes,
daz er der erstgeborn si under vil andren.*³⁸
Und darumb wer einen rehten
wideringang welle haben und sun
werden in Christo, der kere sich mit
rehter gelazsenheit ze im von im selb,
so kumet er, dar er sol.

sed ponimus quod a principio suae
conceptionis ille homo vere fuerit
filius Dei, utpote non habens aliam
hypostasim quam filium Dei . . .

Et ideo non cadit sub merito
alicuius hominis singularis, quia
bonum alicuius puri hominis
non potest esse causa boni totius
naturae.
Non enim ponimus quod ante fuerit
purus homo, et postea per meritum
bonae vitae obtinuerit esse filius
Dei, sicut posuit Photinus,

Summa theol. III 8 1: Respondeo
dicendum quod, sicut tota Ecclesia
dicitur unum corpus mysticum per
similitudinem ad naturale corpus
hominis, quod secundum diversa
membra habet diversos actus,
ut apostolus docet, Rom. XII et
I Cor. XII; ita *Christus dicitur caput
Ecclesiae secundum similitudinem
humani capitis*. . . secundum illud
Rom. VIII, *quos praescivit, hos et
praedestinavit conformes fieri imagi-
nis filii sui, ut sit ipse primogenitus
in multis fratribus*.

³⁵ See *Middle High German Translation of the Summa theologiae by Thomas Aquinas*, ed. by B.Q. Morgan and F.W. Strothmann (Stanford: 1950), 32, 17–22: “Want die verdientlichen werke dez menschen, die ordenent eigentlichen zuo der selikeit, dū da ein lon der tugent ist unde bestat in einer voller gotlicher gebruchunge. Aber die einunge der infleischunge, sit daz si ist in einem personlichen wesen, so übergat si die einunge des gemüetes der selig zuo got, daz da ist übermitz die tat des gebruchenden. Unde also so enmag es niht gevallen under daz verdiente.”

³⁶ See *Middle High German Translation*, 32, 11–13: “sunder wir setzen, daz von dem beginne, da enphangen wart der mensche, do waz er werlich gottis sun, also, daz er dekein ander selbestaung enhatte denne den gottis sun.”

³⁷ See *Middle High German Translation*, 68, 21–22: “Christus ein huopt der cristenheit nach glichnisse dez menschlichen houptes;” *ibid.*, 70, 21–22: “Ez ist zemerken, ob Christus si ein houpte der menschen als nach dem libe.”

³⁸ See *Middle High German Translation*, 70, 11–13: “Die, die er vorbereitet hat, die hat er vorbereitet, daz si werden mitförmig mit dem bilde des gotis suns, daz er der erste geborne si under vil brüedern.”

Christ is, according to Suso, a very special man for three reasons. At first he assumed human nature but not human personhood. It follows that Christ took human nature in such purity that nothing of original sin or of any other sin could touch him. Secondly, the union occurring in Christ's Incarnation, since it occurs in a personal being, surpasses personal being and is higher than the union of the soul of the blessed with God. Thirdly, Christ is also above all other men insofar he is the head of Christianity.

The anthropological meaning of the ontological difference is the following: it is impossible for the human being to be transformed into a substance of a divine person losing his own proper being.

With the help of this long quotation from Aquinas, Suso neutralizes a potential danger in Eckhart's interpretation of the relationship between God and human beings. Through Aquinas's words Suso insists on the difference between Christ and the human being, which Eckhart wants instead to neglect. On the basis of the *Summa theologiae* Suso closes the door to the interpretation of the Eckhardian doctrine of deification given by the Brethren of the Free Spirit movement (which was perhaps an interpretation of Eckhart's doctrine that is more faithful to his words than that given by Suso): the human being has no chance to be transformed into the divine substance.

2.3. Deeply correlated with this issue is Eckhart's anthropology and the doctrine of an uncreated part of the soul. Part of the sixth chapter is dedicated to this problem. It concerns the end and the destination of the detached person. In this state the human being does not remain for himself but is taken up into the One and has become One. Here man does not act as man and is indeed united with God.³⁹

The danger in this doctrine is clearly pointed out by a question posed by the disciple, which closely mirrors the 27th article of the papal bull:⁴⁰

Wie mag nu dis bestan in der warheit, wan es hillet, als ob dú sele zwei iht si, geschaffen und ungeschaffen? Wie mag daz sin, wie mag der Mensch kreature sin und nût kreature?⁴¹

Suso's answer clarifies this controversial point, which remained obscure and suspect also in Eckhart's self-defense in Köln on 13 February 1327:⁴²

³⁹ Heinrich Seuse, *Das Buch der Wahrheit*, 38, 192–40, 197.

⁴⁰ *Acta Echardiana*, n. 65, 599, 91–92: "Primus articulus: 'Aliquid est in anima, quod est increatum et increabile. Si tota anima esset talis, esset increata et increabilis.' Et hoc est intellectus."

⁴¹ Heinrich Seuse, *Das Buch der Wahrheit*, 40, 221–24.

⁴² See *Acta Echardiana*, n. 54, 549, 34–37.

the soul is and remains a creature, even if in the state of detachment the soul does not perceive herself as a creature, but rather as united with God.

Der Mensch mag nüt kreatur und got sin nach únser rede. Mer got ist dri-
valt und eins. Also mag der mensch in etlicher wise, so er sich in got vergat,
eins sin in dem verlierenne und nach usserlicher wise schöwende niessende
sin und des glich. Und des gib ich ein glichnúst. Das öge verlúret sich in
sinem geđerwúrtigen sehenne, wan es wirt eins an dem werke der gesihte
mit sinem gegenwurfe, und blibet doch ietweders, daz es ist.⁴³

Worthy of attention in this doctrinal clarification is the comparison with the eye and the act of seeing, by which Suso is able to explain the state of the soul: the eye loses itself in vision because in the act of seeing it becomes one with its object, yet each remains what it is.⁴⁴ There is not, then, an identity of essence between a part of the soul and God, exactly as it happens to the eye and the object of his seeing, a metaphorical image taken by Suso from Aquinas's *Summa theologiae*:

I answer that two things are required both for sensible and for intellectual vision—namely, power of sight, and union of the thing seen with sight. For vision is made actual only when the thing seen is in a certain way in the seer. Now in corporeal things it is clear that the thing seen cannot be by its essence in the seer, but only by its likeness; as the likeness of a stone is in the eye, by which the vision is made actual, but the substance of the stone is not there. But if the principle of the visual power and the things seen were one and the same thing, it would necessarily follow that the seer would receive both the visual power and the form by which it sees from that one same thing.

Now it is manifest both that God is the author of the intellectual power, and that He can be seen by the intellect. And since the intellectual power of the creature is not the essence of God, it follows that it is some kind of participated likeness of Him who is the first intellect.⁴⁵

⁴³ Heinrich Seuse, *Das Buch der Wahrheit*, 40, 225–42, 232 and 42, 237–42.

⁴⁴ Henry Suso, *The Exemplar*, 321.

⁴⁵ Thomas de Aquino, *Summa theologiae* 1, q. 12, a.2: “Respondeo dicendum quod ad visionem, tam sensibilem quam intellectualem, duo requiruntur, scilicet virtus visiva, et unio rei visae cum visu. Non enim fit visio in actu, nisi per hoc quod res visa non potest esse in vidente per suam essentiam, sed solum per suam similitudinem, sicut similitudo lapidis est in oculo, per quam fit visio in actu, non autem ipsa substantia lapidis. Si autem esset una et eadem res, quae esset principium visivae virtutis, et quae esset res visa, oporteret videntem ab illa re et virtutem visivam habere, et formam per quam videret. Manifestum est autem quod Deus et est auctor intellectivae virtutis, et ab intellectu videri potest. Et cum ipsa intellectiva virtus creaturae non sit Dei essentia, relinquitur quod sit aliqua participata similitudo ipsius, qui est primus intellectus.”

This is the sense according to which one must read the long quotation from Bernard's *De diligendo Deo*, which Suso introduces in the fifth chapter.⁴⁶ In the state of detachment man "lost himself entirely in God, becoming one spirit in all ways with him, just as a small drop of water does which has been dropped into a large amount of wine. Just as the drop of water loses itself, drawing the taste and color of the wine to and into itself, so it happens that those who are in full possession of blessedness lose all human desires . . . Certainly his being remains, but in a different form, in a different resplendence, and in a different power."⁴⁷

The comparison with the drop of water allows Suso to describe the process of union between man and God in terms exactly contrary to that process involved in the Eucharistic sacrament: *gelassenheit* does not bring about any change in the nature and essence of the detached person.⁴⁸

Through the metaphorical images of the act of seeing (Aquinas's) and the drop of water (Bernard's), Suso removes the potential danger from Eckhart's doctrine of *Abgeschiedenheit*, which seems to allude to a substantial change in the soul of the man, comparable to that of the Eucharist.⁴⁹

By reading the *Little Book of the Truth*, a work which has been considered the most difficult and obscure work of the German mystic,⁵⁰ and by inquiring into his silent sources' background, it is possible to draw at least three firm conclusions from the textual evidence.

1. Suso deals explicitly and literally with several points of Eckhart's doctrines condemned by the pope. His work could easily be recognized as an answer to the condemnation and as an attempt to defend Eckhart's most controversial doctrines.
2. The purpose and the goal of the work, as often and openly declared by the author himself, is to base his doctrinal positions on the solid

⁴⁶ Heinrich Seuse, *Das Buch der Wahrheit*, 22, 101–19.

⁴⁷ Henry Suso, *The Exemplar*, 314.

⁴⁸ See F. Tobin, "Coming to Terms," 332.

⁴⁹ See Meister Eckhart, DW I, 110, 8–111, 7: "Wir werden alzemäle transformieret in got und verwandelt.' Merke ein glichnisse. Ze glîcher wîse, als an dem sacramente verwandelt wirt brôt in unsers herren lichamen, swie vil der brôte wære, sô wirt doch éin lichame. Ze glîcher wîse, wæren alliu diu brôt verwandelt in mînen vinger, sô wære doch niht mêr dan éin vinger. Mêr: wûrde mîn vinger verwandelt in daz brôt, sô wære diz als vil als jenez wære. Waz in daz ander verwandelt wirt, daz wirt ein mit im. Alsô wurde ich gewandelt in in, daz er wûrket mich sîn wesen ein unglîch; bî dem lebenden got sô ist daz wâr, daz kein undercheit enist."

⁵⁰ So H.S. Denifle, "Einleitung," xxv.

ground of the "Truth of the Holy Church." Suso attempts to explain his teacher's doctrines by downplaying their significance⁵¹ and often by substituting doctrines taken from the most learned and experienced masters for his views, first of all from Aquinas's *Summa theologiae*. It should not surprise us that the longest, literal quotations we are able to find in the *Little Book of the Truth* come from Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* and from Bernard's *De diligendo Deo*.

3. Finally, there is the attempt to understand the historical and doctrinal meaning of this work, to catch on to the role played by Suso in the Eckhart affair, and, lastly, to define the real historical possibilities of Eckhart's "Weiterwirken" in the period immediately after the papal bull *In agro dominico*: by defending Eckhart through Aquinas does Suso understand or misunderstand Eckhart? Does Suso really understand Eckhart as near or assimilable to Aquinas?

I will try to find a possible interpretative key by looking at Suso's opinion of the philosophical and theological schools of his time, which are referenced in a metaphorical way at the beginning of the second book of *Horologium Sapientiae*,⁵² a work written a few years after *The Little Book of the Truth*.⁵³

The first chapter of the second book of *Horologium sapientiae* deals with the variety of teaching and of disciples, as the chapter's title eloquently points out: "De diversitate admiranda doctrinarum atque discipulorum." Here Suso reports his experience as an avid disciple of Wisdom, who was proceeding from one branch of study to another looking for the true and highest philosophy. In a vision he sees a golden sphere, in which there lived countless masters and students of all the arts and sciences. In this

⁵¹ For the same conclusion, see F. Tobin, "Coming to Terms," 323. It is possible to identify a similar strategy in Marquard of Lindau, as Blumrich has already noted: R. Blumrich, *Marquard von Lindau: Deutsche Predigten. Untersuchungen und Edition* (Diss. Eichstätt: 1989), 282 and *ibid.*, "Einleitung," 60; see also L. Sturlese, "Meister Eckharts Weiterwirken," see 172: "Marquard schließt sich damit der thomistischen *Imago*-Lehre an und distanziiert sich so nicht nur von Eckhart, sondern auch von Dietrich von Freiberg und seiner Schule." See Nadia Bray's chapter in the present volume for the same phenomenon in Franciscan and Augustinian interpreters of Eckhart.

⁵² *Heinrich Seuses Horologium Sapientiae*, ed. P. Künzle, 519, 19–526, 11. I am using here the English translation by E. Colledge, OSA, in Henry Suso, *Wisdom's Watch upon the Hours* (Washington, D.C.: 1994), 234–41.

⁵³ The dating of this work, as with Suso's other works, is controversial. The editor P. Künzle is convinced that Suso did not attend to his composition before 1330, while Sturlese dated this work to the period 1334–39, and Ruh to the years 1331–34. What is nevertheless certain is that the work was written after the *Little Book of the Truth*.

sphere two separate mansions had been built, and each of them had its own teachers and disciples.

The first, the lower one, is that of the liberal arts and the applied sciences. The second mansion is the school of theological truth. In this part of the sphere there are three divisions of students and teachers. Suso deals in detail with the first and the third schools, neglecting almost entirely the second school.⁵⁴ In the first school the scholars sit near the door on the ground, listlessly staring out into the street. The honeyed words proceeding from Wisdom's mouth are turned in their ears into a bitter liquid, of which they drink till they are drunk. All of these men long for and strive for only one thing: to be socially prominent and to show off.

Among them a silver ball had fallen from the sky, rolling around. One teacher had it in his hand, and through this his fame resounded through the whole world; many, seeing this and envying it, tried in every way to snatch the ball from his hand. Here Suso refers to Thomas Aquinas, as numerous manuscripts testify in their marginal notes,⁵⁵ and to the quarrel about his doctrine within or outside the Dominican order (such as the cases of Durand of Saint-Pourçain and William of Ockham).⁵⁶ What is remarkable is Suso's disparaging judgement of Thomas's thought: Thomas

⁵⁴ Just a few words are dedicated to describe the second division: "Porro hi, qui de secundo ordine erant, in statu proprio persistere videbantur" (see *Heinrich Seuses Horologium sapientiae*, 525, 13–14). It is very difficult to attribute a historical identity to the members of this group.

⁵⁵ In at least six manuscripts Thomas Aquinas is referenced in the margins: see *Heinrich Seuses Horologium sapientiae*, 522. See also R. Imbach, "Anmerkungen zu den thomistischen Quellen der 'Horologium sapientiae,'" in *Heinrich Seuses Philosophia spiritualis: Quellen, Konzept, Formen und Rezeption*, ed. R. Blumrich and P. Kaiser (Wiesbaden: 1994), 71–83, esp. 75–76.

⁵⁶ The historical identification of the teachers, who attempt to grasp and steal the ball, has been a very controversial issue among scholars. P. Künzle (see "Einführung," 47ff.) sees in Suso's metaphorical expression a clear allusion to Durand of Saint-Pourçain; J.A. Bizet, *Henri Suso et le déclin de la Scolastique* (Paris: 1946), 305, and K. Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*, 443, to the via moderna-exponents, first of all to Ockham. A recent, peculiar interpretation of this vision is that of R. Imbach, "Die deutsche Dominikanerschule: Drei Modelle einer Theologia mystica," in *Grundfragen Christlicher Mystik. Wissenschaftliche Studientagung Theologia mystica in Weingarten*, (Mystik in Geschichte und Gegenwart) 1, 5 (Stuttgart: 1987), 157–72, esp. 159. Imbach explains the vision as a fictitious representation of the quarrel about Aquinas's doctrine within the German Dominican order. The teachers who are opposing Aquinas in Suso's vision, were, for Imbach, the German representatives of a doctrinal way alternative to Thomism: among them Dietrich of Freiberg, Berthold of Moosburg, and Eckhart. Yet, the negative, disparaging words, by which Suso describes the group of teachers opposing Aquinas, do not allow us to identify them with the historical exponents of a doctrinal movement, in which Suso identifies himself, such as that of the German Dominican school. An allusion to this is easier to be seen in the third division of teachers, which Suso describes as the highest philosophy.

is playing with a silver ball (and not with a golden one) and he is in that group of teachers⁵⁷ who are sitting on the ground near the door, staring out into the street;⁵⁸ in other words, very far from the real Truth.⁵⁹

The third division of teachers, the tradition in which Suso sets himself, is seated beside the Master and as they drink the water of wholesome Wisdom from his mouth they grow so drunk that they forget themselves and everything else, and with heart and mind they turn their eyes and their faces on high and they are carried off to the contemplation of divine things.⁶⁰

Here Suso metaphorically refers to and quotes Eckhart's doctrine.⁶¹ His doctrine is very far from that one of the first group, in which Aquinas sits. The way of studying and teaching of the first group is carnal, which those men practice in whom the letter abounds without the spirit. They are seeking not to praise God nor to edify themselves, but to gain promotion. The third way, let us say Eckhart's way, is spiritual, and the men sitting in this group direct themselves to the due end, and no less are they led inwardly by the spirit of God. This is the true and highest philosophy, to which the disciple Suso devotes himself.⁶²

⁵⁷ Suso underlines it more times. See *Heinrich Seuses Horologium sapientiae*, 522, 3: "in hac mansione . . .;" *ibid.*, 522, 4: "inter eos . . .;" *ibid.*, 522, 7–8: "quidam inter ceteros et super ceteros. . ."

⁵⁸ *Heinrich Seuses Horologium sapientiae*, 521, 4–5: "Quidam in terra prope ianuam sedebant, gustu carentes, et vultum ad exteriora conversum habentes."

⁵⁹ For a contrary interpretation, see W. Senner OP, "Heinrich Seuse und der Dominikanerorden," in *Heinrich Seuses Philosophia spiritualis: Quellen, Konzept, Formen und Rezeption*, ed. R. Blumrich and P. Kaiser (Wiesbaden: 1994), 3–31, see 19–22, and Senner, "Von Albertus Magnus zu Heinrich Seuse: Entwurf und Scheitern der Konzeption einer ganzheitlichen Wissenschaft," in *Heinrich-Seuse-Jahrbuch* 5, 1 (Berlin: 2008), 15–35, esp. 32–35.

⁶⁰ *Heinrich Seuses Horologium sapientiae*, 525, 14–19: "Tertii autem prope magistrum consederant, et aquam sapientiae salutaris ex ore eius bibentes inebriabantur in tantum, ut se ipsos et omnium aliorum obliviscerentur, et corde et animo, oculis ac facie sursum tenderent, et quodam modo in abyssum divinae speculationis ac dulcedinis immersi et absorpti, ad divina contemplantando raperentur."

⁶¹ This is the description of Eckhart's philosophy Suso often gives in the *Little Book of the Truth*.

⁶² *Heinrich Seuses Horologium sapientiae*, 525, 24–526, 11: "Cum autem discipulus haec diligentissime considerasset, admiratione maxima tenebatur, quidnam hoc esset, et maxime de hoc, quod de eadem veritate tanta deformitas in diversis discipulis nascebatur. Intellexitque quasi vocem dicentem sibi: 'Tres ordines, quos vidisti, tres modi sunt studendi atque docendi sacram scripturam. Primus modus est carnalis, quem habent hi, in quibus abundat littera sine spiritu. Qui quanto plus litterati, tanto plus superbia inflati, atque nocivi sibi et aliis esse noscuntur; qui non Dei laudem, vel suam et aliorum aedificationem, sed suam promotionem quaerunt. Secundus modus est animalis, et est in his, qui simplici quidem oculo in actu scholastico ea, quae ad salutem necessaria sunt, quaerunt,

It seems clear, then, that Suso was perfectly aware of the incompatibility between Aquinas's philosophical and theological doctrines and those of Eckhart. Whereas Aquinas and his friends play with a silver ball dealing in great matters and in wonderful things, which are above them and too high for them, Eckhart and his pupils are immersed and absorbed in the depths of divine speculation.

Whereas the Thomistic circle is sitting very far from the Truth, the Eckhardian circle sits beside the Master, namely God, drinking the water of the Wisdom directly from his mouth. This means: Aquinas's and Eckhart's ways are not only different, but are also on two incomparably different levels, and Suso was aware of this. But on the day after the publication of the papal bull *In Agro dominico*, Eckhart's way had been completely defeated. The only possible solution to defend the teacher (and this is what Suso attempts to do in the *Book of the Truth*) was to hide his genuine doctrine under that of a champion of orthodoxy, namely, Thomas Aquinas.

verumtamen opera supererogationis facere et *charismata aemulari meliora* usquequaque negligunt. Tertius vero, qui et spiritualis, est eorum, qui toto cordis affectu ad ea, quae perfectionis sunt, se viribus omnibus extendunt, studiose operam dantes, ut sicut intellectus eorum scientia, sic et affectus eorum divina sapientia repleatur; et sicut proficiunt in cognitione veri, sic et in amore summi boni. Qui *gustant et vident quoniam suavis est dominus* qui se et alios per sacram scripturam ad debitum finem dirigunt, et nihilominus interius *spiritu Dei aguntur*.⁷ Igitur discipulus, aliis omissis cupiebat cum his mansionem habere et se totum conferre ad studium illius verae et summae philosophiae."

MEISTER ECKHART AND VALENTIN WEIGEL

Andrew Weeks

Those with a rudimentary knowledge of Meister Eckhart know him as a mystic, much as those with a superficial knowledge of mysticism think of it as a knowledge that transcends time and space, or a subterranean current of *philosophia perennis* that defies the limits of history and confessional or ideological affiliation. We can evaluate these one-sided notions by considering an author who wrote about his “inner rebirth” and divine knowledge, and in doing so explicitly documented his debt to Meister Eckhart. Considering the life and writings of Valentin Weigel with respect to the circumstances that conditioned them allows us to appreciate that there can be no mystical content without a historical context. In Weigel’s relation to Eckhart, esoteric tradition and the mystical outsider take their place in a common world.

Valentin Weigel (1533–88) was born in the same year as Michel de Montaigne (1533–91). As a dissenting Lutheran pastor in an age of confessional conflict and consolidation, the German dissenter’s posthumously published theoretical treatises sanctioned the authority of the thoughtful private individual for whom his illustrious French contemporary was simultaneously creating an essayistic testimony. Weigel’s writings explicitly acknowledge Meister Eckhart. His sermons are cited based on the so-called “Basel Tauler” (*Basler Tauler-Druck*, 1521, 1522)¹ and attributed to “Eccardus” or “D. Eckhart.”² The recognition accorded by the 16th-century author to his medieval precursor, combined with the relative accessibility of Weigel’s own life, times, and writings, offers us a rare access to their tradition. Their works represent a current of texts and ideas rather than a recurrent self-generating phenomenon or esoteric cult of mysticism. Recent scholarship has reminded us that the noun or concept

¹ *Joannis Tauleri des seligen lerers Predigt/ fast fruchtbar zû eim recht christlichen leben* (Basel: 1522). Cited henceforth as BT.

² Valentin Weigel, *Sämtliche Schriften* (Neue Edition), vol. 3, ed. Horst Pfefferl (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: 1996), 116. References to the Pfefferl edition will be cited by volume and page to PW, while references to the earlier, incomplete edition of Valentin Weigel, *Sämtliche Schriften*, ed. Will-Erich Peuckert, Winfried Zeller, Alfred Ehrentreich, and Horst Pfefferl (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: 1962f.), are cited as ZW by volume and page.

of *mysticism* is relatively modern: to a considerable degree, it reflects the post-Enlightenment understanding of the antithesis of reason and religion.³ Weigel casts a fuller light on the partial truths of our image of mysticism.

Valentin Weigel is distant but not inaccessible.⁴ Despite gaps in our knowledge, we can trace circles of information. These begin with his humble origins in an era and region beset by confessional tensions during the third decade of the Protestant Reformation. Born to plebeian parents in the Saxon town of Großenhain three years after Melanchthon's *Confessio Augustana* established an initial codification of Lutheranism, Weigel was nine years old when his homeland of Albertine Saxony converted to Lutheranism in consequence of a dynastic succession. He was a teenager when the defeat of the German Protestant territories in the Schmalkaldic War by the Catholic emperor plunged German Lutheranism into a crisis that smoldered for decades. Weigel was a student during the Gnesio-Lutheran controversies, as Lutheran theologians contended first over the options of resistance or accommodation to the emperor, and subsequently with each other over various related theological issues. Their disputes and positions might strike us now as an abstruse quarrel over the fine points of doctrine and exegesis, but they were motivated by the deeper issues of whether the state, church, or the individual should arbitrate beliefs.

If in many German cities and lands the advent of the Lutheran faith was heralded as a liberation and empowerment, Weigel's experience was ambivalent. For the plebeian youth, it meant sponsorship to attend the Fürstenschule of St Afra in Meissen and later to study theology at the universities of Leipzig and Wittenberg, followed by a lifetime position as the town pastor of the Saxon city of Zschopau. But the Reformation also meant that doctrines were imposed by those in control. Whoever deviated from the serially reformulated standards of faith was harshly disciplined. This included Weigel's esteemed teachers. Early in his pastoral career,

³ See Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism: Origins to the Fifth Century, Volume One of The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: 2000), 266–67 (“‘Mysticism’ as a noun is a fairly recent creation, the product of early seventeenth-century France, as the researches of Michel de Certeau have shown.”); see Michel de Certeau, “‘Mystique’ au XVII^e siècle: Le problème du langage ‘mystique,’” in *L’Homme devant Dieu: Mélanges offertes au Père Henri du Lubac*, vol. 2 (Paris: 1964), 267–91.

⁴ His life, times, and writings are summarized in Andrew Weeks, *Valentin Weigel (1533–1588): German Religious Dissenter, Speculative Theorist, and Advocate of Tolerance* (New York: 2000), and in briefer form in Valentin Weigel, *Selected Spiritual Writings*, trans. and intro. Andrew Weeks, with a preface by R. Emmet McGlaughlin (New York: 2003), 9–49.

Weigel was denounced by a fellow clergyman for doctrinal deviations. He was required to vindicate himself in writing before church authorities. Though his defense was successful, the dissenting treatises that made his name synonymous with vile heresy beginning in the 17th century could be shared only in manuscript with a limited circle in his lifetime. With the exception of one funeral elegy, his writings remained unpublished until 20 years after his death.

Three tendencies define the background of his writing and leave their mark on its content: Lutheranism, doctrinal controversy, and anti-clericalism. Weigel's guiding star was the Lutheran Reformation, despite the fact that his formulations appear to deviate from Lutheran doctrine. He lived and died a Lutheran town pastor. He conformed to the aspect of Lutheranism summarized by the German word *Innerlichkeit*. "Inwardness" is the internalization of faith that shifts it away from works, ceremonies, or perfunctory church authority.

We can assess Weigel's genuine Lutheran spirit and his un-Lutheran doctrinal deviations by considering his official defense of 22 August 1572 (*Vom wahren, seligmachenden Glauben*, "On the True and Saving Faith"). Under challenge, the Zschopau pastor reconfirmed his duty to preach contrition and the forgiving of sins; but he condemned the superficial acceptance of faith as a kind of promissory contract that fails to enter and transform the heart of the believer. More radical still, Weigel contended that the saving faith might dwell more in the hearts of heathens and children than in those who only outwardly professed to be Christians: "From this it follows necessarily that not the name, nor the parents, nor the place, nor the external knowledge and hearing make a Christian, but rather the true faith alone, not in one's mouth, but in the inner ground of one's heart." (*Auß diesem allen folget notwendig, daß nicht der Name noch die Eltern noch der Ort noch das eusere Wissen vnd Hören einen Christen mache, sondern allein der wahre Glaube einen Christen mache, nicht im Maule, sondern im innern Grunde des Herzens*—ZW 5, 55). This deceptively simple formulation rests on the contrasting metaphor of the private inner ground of faith with a faith that is external, and on the equation of the external with a status inherited either from parentage or residence or from the received knowledge that comes "from hearing." To us, the metaphor of the external is vague and scattershot in its implications; but in Weigel's own time it effectively contrasted the thoughtful individual whose conscience is ruled by an inner ground of the heart with the temporal authoritarianism of rulers, pastors, or parents who insist on their right to dictate belief. *Inner* and *outer* are thus signifiers of the struggle of

the morally awakened woman or man of conscience against authoritarian institutions.

From the vantage point of what came to be known as orthodox Lutheranism, Weigel's defense courts heresy. It questions the need for the dissemination of the saving doctrine by means of the spoken word of the sermon, received by the believer "from hearing" (*ex auditu*). Indeed, those who cannot "hear" it because they are too remote from Christendom or too young to understand are taken into the fold of the faithful by Weigel. This undermines the need for and dissolves the outer confines of the church. The metaphor of the inner therefore correlates with the universal. Present-day Lutherans might look back at Weigel's spiritualism and declare him outside their church, but it is not factually accurate to ignore the relative diversity of Lutheranism under the less codified conditions of Weigel's early career, or to ignore the widespread resistance to the foundational Lutheran Formula of Concord of 1577 by those who regarded it as a violation of the evangelical freedom of faith. The confessionalization of the churches shaped Protestantism in ways that could not be rescinded; but in its early stages objections were raised against codifying doctrines and rendering them mandatory. This was regarded as an oppression of spiritual freedom and conducive to sectarian strife and religious war. The dissenters were right. Strictures of faith were dictated or enforced by the external factors of parentage or territorial rule. Doctrinal codification and enforcement created preconditions for religious war.

This brings us to a second tendency that defines the background of Weigel's writing: his awareness of doctrinal controversy. It would have been almost impossible for anyone educated in Lutheran theology in Weigel's time and place not to have been familiar with the many-sided Gnesio-Lutheran controversies that had been catalyzed when Emperor Charles V defeated the Protestant Schmalkaldic League in 1546, forcing Protestants to choose between resistance and compromise. The party of compromise had been led by Luther's Wittenberg colleague Phillip Melanchthon, and the party of resistance by Matthias Flacius Illyricus. Melanchthon was willing to accept adjustments of ceremony as nonessential in order to maintain the doctrine of salvation by faith alone. Flacius held that no compromise imposed by force could be inconsequential. This "adiaphoristic" controversy was accompanied by debates over the active agency of the human will in conversion (synergism), the depravity of the fallen human condition, and various related doctrines. From his earliest writings, Weigel refers to such disputes as a disreputable "quarrel" (*Zank*) among theologians. Though he condemns the quarrel, its positions

remain generalized. His references are overlaid with an awareness of the increasing tension between Lutherans and Calvinists over the doctrine of predestination. There are parallels between Weigel's views and those of the controversialists. He appears Philippist in regarding ceremonies as inessential; Flacian in opposing compulsion in matters of faith; and Lutheran in opposing predestination. Weigel did not take sides. He sought to transcend the premises of the theological quarrels.

A third tendency implicit in the previous two may surprise some readers. Pastor Weigel echoed and magnified the widespread anticlericalism of the Reformation era. The notion that the age of faith was also a period of anticlericalism seems contradictory to us now, but Luther's assertions of salvation by faith alone and of doctrine based solely on Scripture had aggravated an older strain of anticlericalism so that it became pervasive in the 16th century. Only recently have scholars focused attention on the phenomenon of a widespread popular hostility toward religious professionals. Priests, pastors, and theologians were reviled as the greedy, arrogant, and tyrannical purveyors of pernicious and self-serving dogmas.⁵

The positive inverse of this widespread Reformation-era anticlericalism consisted of the championing of the informed lay believer whose conscience and reading of the Bible made the greedy and arrogant clergy superfluous. In popular slogans, anticlericalism was marshaled by all parties to the religious conflicts. Its sentiments were exploited by Lutherans, Catholics, and radicals against their opponents.⁶ The Gnesio-Lutheran controversies of Weigel's time led to a particular version of anticlericalism centered on a rejection of the quarreling doctrinalists. From beginning to end, Weigel lambasted theologians as "false" or indeed as "servants of Antichrist," and in the same breath championed the lay folk. These

⁵ See Peter A. Dykema and Heiko A. Oberman (eds.), *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought 51 (Leiden: 1993).

⁶ See Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History* (New York: 2003), on the deeply rooted and widespread phenomenon of Reformation-era anticlericalism: "it is important to realize that the anticlerical rhetoric that became an integral part of the Reformation was actually the product of long-standing disputes among the clergy, rather than spontaneous lay criticism of their faults" (32); however, this certainly did not prevent it from coming into popular currency. Opposition to tithes, "merged with heated rhetoric against clergy generally, which Luther would find difficult to repudiate since he has supplied most of it in and after 1520; clergy were accused of *Totenfresserei*, feeding on the dead..." (149); moreover, "rebel clergy gave voice to much of this anticlericalism" (149). In the end, both the Protestant spiritualists and the Jesuits channeled Reformation-era anticlericalism (218). In the former case, anticlericalism was linked to a kind of anti-intellectualism put forth by the spiritualist intellectuals themselves.

tendencies are linked to his mystically accented Lutheranism. One source of his dissenting "inwardness" was Meister Eckhart.

For us it makes sense to read Eckhart's sermons as expressions of elite culture, couched in puzzles beyond popular understanding. Was he teasing those poor souls to whom he preached by telling them that, until they became equal to the truth he spoke, they could not comprehend what he was saying? The fact is that we have too little knowledge of who read Eckhart and how. But we do know that his tradition became associated with a new lay self-awareness. Eckhart drew upon a profound knowledge of scholastic theology, but preached in German to nuns and pious lay folk who were not trained theologians. Among them, the devout Beguines were brutally persecuted. Following in Eckhart's footsteps, the message of Tauler was influenced by the Strasbourg circles of the lay "Friends of God." In Tauler's lifetime, the laypeople of Strasbourg were abandoned by the church when their city fell under a papal interdiction and Tauler's Dominican order was forbidden to administer the sacraments, even exiling itself from Strasbourg.⁷ Typically, the late medieval and early modern quarrel between state and church was carried out over the backs of the innocent laity. We can assume that Tauler was aware of their plight. Lay self-assertion was incorporated into the tradition of which he was a part by the time the late medieval *Basel-Tauler* began to influence people in the Reformation era.

This influential volume of the sermons of Tauler and Eckhart, printed in Basel in 1521 and 1522, was prefaced by a peculiar account that was clearly intended to put the authority of the pious laity above that of the clergy. The "History and Life of the Venerable Dr Johann Tauler" (*"Historia vnd Leben des erwürdigen doctors Johannis Tauleri"*) is a simplistic didactic account of how the famous Dominican preacher was supposed to have been led to true enlightenment by a nameless layman. Inspired by God in a dream, the layman traveled far to hear the sermons of the famous preacher, begging him to preach a sermon on the attainment of the "highest and best" state of grace. Condescendingly, the preacher obliges. The layman writes everything down and presents it to the preacher. Impressed at this perfect record of his words, the Master entreats the layman to remain with him. Now, however, the relationship of master to pupil is inverted. The layman evidently possesses a superior knowledge and conduit to God. He lectures his master on the true humility, the letter that kills, the sweetness of the

⁷ Luise Gnädinger, *Johannes Tauler. Lebenswelt und mystische Lehre* (Munich: 1993), 32.

Holy Spirit, the inadequacy of reason and the senses, and the purification of the believer through suffering.

The tendentious *Historia Tauleri* is ham-fisted; but this only makes its message all the more obvious. It is a message that Weigel, for all his sophistication, would in principle have agreed with. Book learning is not a sufficient path to grace, nor even a good point of departure. Without its benefit, the layman of the *Historia Tauleri* has been enlightened by the Holy Spirit. This anticlerical prioritization of the lay above the learned embodies the sense of a central tenet of the *Basel-Tauler*: “the letter kills, but the spirit gives life” (2 Cor. 3:6). When Weigel founded his mystical-speculative edifice on such simple alternatives, he drew them in large measure from the *Basel-Tauler* and from the equally unadorned *Theologia Germanica*, which had powerfully influenced Luther and the radicals of the early Reformation.

Weigel deliberately drew on the medieval tradition. He was well aware that it consisted of individual authors rather than an anonymous *philosophia perennis*. His citations of the words of Eckhart and Tauler are clearly seminal. Eckhart is cited at length and verbatim in the earliest surviving writings, the *Two Useful Treatises*, dated 1570, only four years after the new pastor’s arrival in Zschopau. Their preface begins thus in setting out Weigel’s pastoral objectives:

In these two booklets, *On Contrition* and *On Poverty of the Spirit*, which I have compiled from the sermons of Tauler, writing a good part of it myself as well, true and thorough instruction on how one should embark and how one should comport oneself in one’s conversion or justification. Since this article [of faith] is the foremost, about which there is much dispute, instruction is given here; and the error and mistake revealed with respect to: [1] original sin; [2] free will, [and 3] conversion of the human being... (Z 3, 7)⁸

⁸ The opening address to the reader goes on to list five additional points of contention on p. 8. Thus, in full, the opening words of the treatises read: “Günstiger Leser! [Favorable Reader!] Inn diesen Büchlein von der Buße vnd Armut des Geistes, welches ist aus den Predigten Tauleri von mir zusammengezogen vnd auch ein gutt Theil von mir selber geschrieben, wirdt furgehalten ein waarer grundlicher Vnterricht, wie sich ein Mensch schicken vnd halten soll vnd muß inn seiner Bekehrung oder Rechtfertigung. Dieweil nun solcher Articul der furnehmste ist, vnd darinne man sehr zancket, so wirdt Vnterricht gegeben vnd auch der Fehl vnd darinne man sehr zancket, so wirdt Vnterricht gegeben vnd auch der Fehl vnd Irrtumb angezeigt, als nemblich

von der Erbsundee,
vom freyen Willen,
von der Bekehrung des Menschen /8/
von der waaren neuen Gebuhr,
von der Wassertaufe, vom Priester gevubet

These are not only questions of sovereign importance—they are also matters of bitter debate. The tract proceeds discursively to a readily intelligible account of human origins, transgression, and rebirth. Weigel is orthodox in preaching contrition, but deviant in ascribing inner faith to those whose age or birthplace would make them unfamiliar with Christian doctrine. Throughout the first of the two treatises the author's own voice prevails; but near the end of the first tract and in the second Eckhart is cited in lengthy quotations that are scarcely integrated. It appears as if the words of the mysterious Dominican who had been dead for 250 years somehow held out the prospect of a clarification of points unresolved; but only a prospect. For its realization, Weigel would need to interpret Eckhart's undigested paradoxes in his own discursive prose.

Chapter Three of the first of *Two Useful Treatises (On Contrition)* focuses on the issue of free will in conversion, an echo of the Gnesio-Lutheran synergistic controversy. He links this issue to the doctrine of predestination espoused by "the false theologians" (ZW 3, 16). Weigel does not mention the Calvinists; but the final edition of *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* appeared in 1559. It had confirmed double predestination: God chooses both the elect for grace and the reprobate for damnation. In taking this position, the Calvinists could claim support from Luther's treatise *On the Bondage of the Will* (1525).⁹ Weigel's rejection of predestination was Lutheran in spirit, yet general in its formulation. Logically, the Calvinists held the high ground: how could God choose some for salvation without also choosing others for damnation? It was hardly a fluke that the Lutheran dissenter had recourse to mystical tradition. Confronted with the either/or of doctrinal logic, Weigel adopted a language of paradox which harked back to sources that had inspired Luther during the first years of the Reformation. In doing so, he also looked forward in challenging the premises of the destructive Lutheran-Calvinist dilemma by insisting on a language that shifted the crux of conversion to the inner disposition of the believer.

Chapters nine and ten dissect the meaning of contrition. Whoever is motivated by fear of hell or longing for heaven is not truly contrite. True

von Natur vnd Eigenschafft der Kinderlein der Christen vnd Heiden,
von Adams Fall und seiner Besserung,
von der Vergebung der Sunden."

⁹ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, 4 (*Reformation of Church Dogma, 1300–1700*) (Chicago: 1984), 218.

contrition must be indifferent to rewards and punishments. True contrition must transcend the worldly frame of reference that sustains fears or desires. This nearly unimaginable state was revealed to Weigel by Eckhart's sermon *On True Poverty*.¹⁰ Incorporated verbatim into the *Second Treatise*, the sermon suggests a borrowed solution still in need of reevaluation and reinterpretation. The process of interpreting Eckhart's paradoxical formulation coincides with the main development of Weigel's thought.

Roughly half of Eckhart's sermon on the text from the Beatitudes ("Blessed are the poor in spirit," Mt. 5:3) constitutes Chapter Three of Weigel's *Second Treatise, On True Poverty of the Spirit, or Abandoned Abandonment*. The chapter begins with a more conciliatory version of the paradox that concludes both his chapter and Eckhart's sermon: "But whoever does not resemble this speaking truth, will not understand this speech on the poverty of the spirit" (*Wer aber dieser sprechenden Wahrheit nicht gleich ist, der wirdt auch nicht vernehmen diese Rede von Armut des Geistes*).¹¹ Not doctrine, but the imitation of Christ in accordance with the Sermon on the Mount is the key to salvation. Next comes a passage from Eckhart that recapitulates an impulse of the mendicant orders, which, as such, is alien to the antimonasticism of the Reformation: "He is poor in spirit who wants nothing" (*Der ist arm im Geiste, der da nichts will*—DW II, 728). Typically for Eckhart's thinking, the condition of wanting nothing is equated with the condition of the soul before it came into existence in creation (*Wann sol der Mensch waarhafftige Armut haben, so mus er seines geschaffenen Willens also ledig sein, als er wahr, da er noch nichts wahr*—ZW 3, 62). This is also the condition in which nothing is known: "he is poor [in spirit] who knows nothing" (see DW II, 728). For Eckhart the context is monastic: he leaps to the question of whether the greater blessedness is in love or knowledge, whether the Franciscan or Dominican ideal. He concludes that it is in neither the one nor the other. There is something in the soul prior to either and from which both flow (DW II, 729): whoever comprehends this knows true bliss. This contemplation on

¹⁰ The definitive version is found in Meister Eckhart, *Beati pauperes spiritu*, in *Deutsche Werke*, ed. Josef Quint (Stuttgart: 1958f.), vol. 2, 478ff. Citations of Eckhart's sermons will refer to the title of the sermon and the volume and page in Quint's edition (DW II, 478ff.).

¹¹ The modern German translation in DW II, 731 reads: "Wer diese Rede nicht versteht, der bekümmere sein Herz nicht damit. Denn solange der Mensch dieser Wahrheit nicht gleicht, solange wird er diese Rede nicht verstehen; denn dies ist eine unverhüllte Wahrheit, die da gekommen ist aus dem Herzen Gottes unmittelbar."

the preexistence of the “spark of the soul” is followed by another thought, one more useful in the pastoral context of Weigel’s treatise: “This [i.e. the condition of not knowing] has neither before nor after and it awaits no future thing; for it can neither gain nor lose” (*Diß hat weder vor noch nach vnd es wartet keines zukunfftigen Dinges, denn diß mag weder gewinnen noch verliehren*—ZW 3, 64—DW II, 729). True contrition is only possible if the soul can remove itself from time by ceasing to anticipate future rewards and punishments. It can only do this to the extent that there is some power in the soul that is outside the world of time. This something is the precondition of knowledge and will. Its power can only be apprehended by abstracting from all knowing and wanting: what is left is God. Aside from the mystical aspect of this thought, it has a pragmatic consequence. In the *Two Useful Treatises*, it helps avoid the impasse of divine predestination, even while accounting for the futility of human works and efforts. For, as we cease to know and will for ourselves, God knows and wills through us.

Not only is Weigel eager to allow Eckhart to speak on his behalf. He gives full latitude to paradoxes of thought that could surely have been a provocation to his 16th-century lay congregation. In pursuit of a total surrender to divine agency within us, Weigel cites Eckhart: “I ask God to make me free of God, for inessential essence is above God and above difference” . . . “In accordance with my eternal birth, I have been eternally, and am [now] and will continue to be eternally” . . . “In my birth, all things were born, and I was a thing of myself and of all other things besides” . . . “If I were not, neither would God be.” “When I flowed out [i.e. of the eternal Being], all things spoke: that is God.” (*Darumb so bitte ich Gott, das er mich quit mache Gottes, wann vnwesendtlch Wesen ist vber Gott vnd vber Vnterscheidt . . . Nach meiner ewigen Geburt Weise so bin ich ewiglich gewesen vnd bin und soll ewiglich bleiben. . . Jnn meiner Gebuht wurden alle Dinge gebohren, vnd ich war Sache meiner selbst vnd aller Dingen. . . Wehre ich nicht, so wehre nicht Gott*—Z 3, 67). Pursuing Eckhart’s stream of paradoxes, Weigel concludes his key chapter in the treatise *On True Poverty of the Spirit* with that purest expression of the *unio mystica*: “God is one in the spirit. Whoever wants to understand this chapter, must be like this truth; otherwise it cannot be understood” (*Wer diß Capittel verstehen will, muß dieser Waarheit gleich sein; sonst wirdt es nicht verstannden*—Z 3, 68). The whimsical, contradictory, and teasing qualities of such utterances might attest to Weigel’s literary taste and perhaps also to his sense of humor, but the Lutheran pastor did not imitate this style as

did Angelus Silesius; he instead chose to interpret Eckhart in developing his own discursive theory of knowledge.

Another key citation of Eckhart by Weigel is found in the almost equally early *Short Report and Introduction to the German Theology*, a fragmentary draft dedicated to a pastoral colleague, with a preface signed on 25 March 1571. Like the *Two Useful Treatises*, the *Short Report* contains themes and materials that evolve into the mature form of Weigel's thought. It begins by placing the *Theologia Germanica* side by side with the first three chapters of Genesis. Either source is tantamount to the essential admonition that Adam should die and Christ be born within us, a claim that echoes the previous two treatises (Z 3, 94). The antithesis at their core is the alternatives of self and God out of which Weigel projects his worldview. God loves himself because his essence is love and there is none beside him; but the creature that would be like God in loving its self falls as Lucifer and emerges as the evil of this world. A source is more essential than its shadow. Turning from God to self means turning to nothingness and falsehood. Weigel asserts that to pursue such a rule of exegesis by interpreting the Bible "in the light of nature" is to reclaim superior "terminos theologiae" (Z 3, 114) and reject the "literalist theologians" (Z 3, 96), who are responsible for the doctrinal controversies. Thus Weigel mounts his defense of human free will. Thanks in part to Eckhart and his tradition, it leads to an epistemology that can claim to supersede the shallow epistemological terms of the literalist doctrinarians.

Since epistemology is a key element of Weigel's theory, we must consider the fine points of his version of Eckhart's notion of image. Weigel is cited below on the right alongside the *Basel-Tauler*. He comes close enough to quoting from his source that the slight differences in his wording signal the outline of his program:

Die ander eygenschafft des bildes
söllent ir mercken an der gleycheit
des bildes . . . das bild ist sein selbs
nit/ noch ist in im selber nit. *Zu
gleycher weise als das bild das in
dem aug empfangen wirt/ das ist
des auges nit/ vnd hat kein wesen an
dem auge/ sunder es hat allein ein
zûhange vnd anhaften an dem des
bild es ist/ haruß ist es sein selbs*

¶ Nun mercken mich recht/ was
eigenlich ein bild sey/ das söllent
ir mercken an vier stücken oder
villicht wirt ir mer. Bild ist sein
selbst nit/ noch ist im selber nit.
Es ist allein dem/ des bild es ist/
denn ist es nitt. Bild nimpt allein
sein wesen on mittel/ an dem des
bild es ist/ vnd hat ein wesen mit
im/ vnd ist dz Bild wesen. *Diß ist nit*

nit/ vnd ist im selber nit/ sunder es ist eygentlich dem des bild es ist/ vnd ist im allzūmal/ vnd von dem nimpt es sein wesen. Dann betrachte die Eygenschafft der Bildnus / so wirstu sehen/ was eine jede vernünfftige Creatur Gott schuldig sey auff Erden vnd im Himmel/ nemblich ein jedes Bild hat solche Art vnd Eygenschafft/ daß es nicht von ihm selber ist. *Item daß es nicht sein selbst eigen Bilde ist/ vnd daß es allezeit zu dem zeige/ leite vnd führe/ deß Bildnus es treget / vnd ist nicht ihme selber / es kan auch nicht ohne den bestehn/ von deme es sein Wesen hat/ wie ein Schatten ohne seinen Baum nicht*

gesprochen von den dingen die man sol reden in der schül / sonder man mag sy wol sprechen vff dem Stül zū einer lere. (Basel-Tauler, 299) mag Schatten bleiben. Noch viel weniger mag Creatur leben / stehen vnd gehen ohne Gott. Diese Lehre von dem Bildnus gehöret nicht allein in die Schule / sondern auch auff die Cantzel für das Volck / denn auß der Betrachtung lernen wir was der Wille Gottes gegen vns in Zeit vnd in Ewigkeit/ nemblich wir werden vnterweiset Christum zu kennen/ wie wir vns halten sollen gegen Gott alhier in der Zeit vnd hernach in der Ewigkeit. (Z 3, 107).

You should note the other characteristic of the image, the equality of the image...the image is not its own, nor does it exist in itself. *Just as the image that is received in the eye does not belong to the eye and has no substance in the eye, but instead has an inclination and attachment to that of which it is an image: from this it follows that it is not its own and does not exist in itself, but rather [pertains] to that of which it is the image and is indeed for this, and takes its being from it.*

¶ Now take careful note: as to what an image is, you should understand this from four things, or perhaps more. Image is not its own, and not in itself. It is only for the one of which it is an image; for it is nothing [in itself]. The image receives its substance immediately, from the one of which it is the image; and has its being with it; and is the image-substance. *This is not said about things to be discussed in the school, but rather should be stated from the pulpit.*

For consider the characteristic of the image: you will recognize [from this] what it is that every rational creature owes to God on earth and in heaven. That is to say: every image has its nature and property

[in the fact] that it is not of itself. *Namely, that it is not its own image; and that it always leads and conducts [us] to the one whose image it bears; and is not for itself; nor can it subsist without the one from whom*

it has its being. Just as a shadow without the tree cannot go on being a shadow, so much the less can the creature stand and move about without God. *This teaching belongs not only in the school, but also in the pulpit before the people.*

For out of such contemplation we learn what the will of God is with regard to us in time and eternity: in particular, we are instructed as to how we will know Christ, [and] how we should relate to God both in time and afterward in eternity.

There are noticeable differences in emphasis and formulation. Eckhart's sermon on the text *Quasi vas auri solidum ornatum omni lapide pretioso*, Eccl. 50:10 (see DW I, 492ff.) has a sentence (italicized in the above) which states that the image received by the eye does not belong to the eye but rather to the thing that it sees. This is missing in Weigel, who will soon theorize that all knowledge is indeed within the knower. At the end of the two passages (again italicized in the citation), "All of this" (*Diß*) or "the doctrine of the image" (*Diese Lehre von dem Bildnus*) is said to have its proper place not in the school (i.e. the university or seminary), but rather in the preacher's pulpit, to which Weigel adds, even more emphatically: "before the people" (*auff die Cantzel für das Volck*). He then goes on to detail three benefits of the doctrine of the image. It can teach what the will of God is with respect to us. It can impart to us a knowledge of Christ. And it can tell us how we should relate to God in time and eternity.

Where before Weigel quoted verbatim, he now begins to choose and edit, taking up the concept of the image, but not in the form suggested by Eckhart's sermon. He takes it instead as the core of a teaching that should contain *in nuce* all the essential teachings of religion, just as the individual human being or the seed in nature can be said to contain everything in microcosm. Creation projects an image of the Creator. Insofar as the creature Adam is free, he is a complete image of God. But in using his freedom for self-love rather than obedience, Adam follows the selfish path of Lucifer. The human creature can become the new Adam by following Christ, the perfect divine image, but this requires transcending all fear of punishment and hope of reward by negating human will and knowledge. The teaching of the image is supposed to simplify or unite all of Scripture. To do this, the terms of theology, creation, Creator, creature, will, knowledge, and grace must be reinterpreted. To this end, Weigel draws on sources that include the Christian natural philosophy of Paracelsus. The concepts of microcosm and macrocosm project a reality in which all things are in all. This could be a universe of grace, if only the human creature would yield to God's will instead of opposing it, as do the evil human beings, or

trying to gainsay and force it, as do the “false theologians”. “For God wants to take the human being to himself and to be all in all, yet not without the human being: the human being can accomplish nothing without God; and God does not want to [do so] without the human being. Therefore, God behaves actively and the human being [should] behave passively” (*Dann Gott will den Menschen gar an sich nehmen vnd alles in allem sein / doch nicht ohne den Menschen / der Mensch vermag nichts ohne Gott / vnd Gott will nicht ohne den Menschen / drumh helt sich Gott wirklich vnd der Mensch leidlich*—ZW 3, 112). It is evident from Weigel’s use of his sources that he expects his doctrine of the image to unite a diverse set of dissenters ranging from Eckhart and Tauler to the deviants or heretics of the Reformation era. Their mysticism promises a true reformation for the awakened and conscientious layperson.

No less than Eckhart, Weigel preaches an ethic of perfect inner obedience to God which for either author paradoxically annuls the authority of institutions and doctrines without openly defying them. For Eckhart, this meant outer obedience to the church, from which the freed spirit is inwardly emancipated. For Weigel, in his very different times, there was no longer *the* church to be obedient to. Instead, an array of confessions and doctrines pressed competing demands for obedience. Doctrines were altered without consulting the laity, in violation of the conscience of the individual. The Formula of Concord (1577) burdened consciences even more harshly, when pastors and teachers were required to sign and subscribe not only to its codification of Lutheran teachings, but also to its condemnation of other believers, among whom were the sorely persecuted Anabaptists.

In the post-Reformation world, the individual believer was supposed to retain a recourse: according to Luther’s early Reformation teachings, the layperson who read the Bible was a “lay priest” whose authority was equal or superior to that of the church. But what if individuals and churches read the same Bible, only to arrive at diverse competing doctrines? In order to resolve this quandary, Weigel needed something more than his “doctrine of the image,” understood as the coherent core teaching in the Bible, the spirit behind its letter, contained in it like the nut in its outer shell. He needed a new epistemology that could appeal to the common sense of the layperson and at the same time account for differing impressions or for differences between the impressions and things in themselves. Rooted in the likeness of the spirit and its object, the new epistemology secured the objectivity of the living spirit beneath the dead external letter. Mindful

of the variants of mystical or devotional inwardness inherited from Eckhart or the Reformation, Weigel was compelled to go beyond them in formulating something which appears to anticipate the inner truth-bearing authority of Kantian idealism.

In quick succession, Weigel produced a series of writings that subordinated his doctrinal quandaries and mystical sources to a new epistemology. The lay mind can distinguish between the letter and spirit of Scripture because the human being is dual and complex, an image of God on the one hand and of the world on the other. The human creature is a microcosm, bearing all spheres of being within; and it is trichotomous, consisting of body, spirit, and the soul, which is the life-giving breath inspired by God. Moreover, the mind is complex. Following the 12th-century churchman Hugo of St Victor, Weigel writes of a threefold eye. The eye of the flesh or *oculus carnis* sees only this world. The *oculus rationis* empowers the practical intelligence of human arts. The *oculus mentis seu intellectus* intuits God and the angelic world. The first sees only what is present. The second, as imagination, can call to mind what is absent. The third is capable of transcending the limits of the senses in finite space and time, moving by way of the paradoxes of infinite divine being to an apprehension of the higher unity in God. Equipped with this conceptual armory, Weigel stakes out his theological epistemology. Just as our perceptions of objects depend upon perspective, one and the same object of perception can yield conflicting understandings: "from this it follows that knowledge comes from the eye itself and not from the *object*" (*daraufß volget, daß die erkenntnus herkomme vom auge selber, vnd nicht vom Obiecto*—PW 3, 79 *Gnothi seauton*). Without hesitation, he moves from the theory of perception to the purpose behind it. The Bible is an object that remains constant yet gives rise to variant readings; for just "as the eye is, so is the knowledge" (*wie das auge ist, also ist auch die Erkhentnus*): "if your heart or understanding is pure and clear, then everything you do or abstain from doing will also be just" (*so dein Herz oder verstandt rein vnnd lauter ist, so wirdt auch all dein Thuen vnnd lassen rechtschaffen sein*). Given the way this applies to exegesis and theology, the problem in religion becomes not so much that the false theologians engage in false reasoning. The problem is that their hearts and minds are false. Though this may strike us now as an *ad hominem* attack, Weigel at least does not assail his rivals in the manner of the time, as literal agents of Satan.

Looking back from Weigel to Eckhart, it is striking how the Lutheran's formulation ("if your heart or understanding is pure and clear, then

everything you do or abstain from doing will be just") approximates the dictum of the Dominican's fourth "Speech of Instruction" (*Rede der Unterweisung*), according to which we should worry less about what we do or do not do, and more about what we *are*. If we are good, so are our works. We cannot know for certain that Weigel knew Eckhart's *Discourses of Instruction*: the similarity of their formulations suggests the degree to which the Protestant pastor recapitulated the spirit of his high medieval Dominican precursor even while formulating a theory of knowledge that is closer to modernity.

Though Weigel soon moved beyond citing him verbatim, he still assumed that Eckhart's intricate medieval readings of Scripture, remote as they were from Lutheran exegesis, harbored profound truths that anticipated his own insights. Weigel's *Gnothi seauton* of 1571 paraphrases at length Eckhart's allegorical reading of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4:7–30).¹² Quoting explicitly ("D. Eckhart sprach..."), Weigel follows him in recounting how Jesus asked the Samaritan woman for a drink; how he offered her the "living water"; and how he told her she had had five men and that the one she had now was not her husband. This is followed by Jesus' more doctrinally pointed words about worshipping God neither on the mountain nor in the temple but in spirit and truth. Faithfully, Weigel retails Eckhart's allegorical interpretation of the five men, understood as the five senses, and the last man who is not hers, as her free will that is captive to mortal sin. None of this is left out by Weigel, though it follows a pattern of exegesis that he does not adopt for his own use, and though he has already stated the main point without allegory at the beginning: "the highest good or kingdom of God is close to you; for it is within you" (*daß höchste guet oder Reich Gottes ist eüch nahe, dann Es ist in Eüch*—PW 3, 116).¹³ This inwardness is correlated by the Lutheran pastor with the universalism that is intrinsic to the scriptural encounter of Jew with Samaritan.

In an apparent quest for a suprahistorical agreement, Weigel compares the sermon with Paracelsus' *De Fundamento Scientiarum Sapientiaeque*, citing it by author and title. Paracelsus had extolled human beings as universally equal inheritors of a wisdom from God: "for so great and so noble is the human being that he bears God's image and is an heir of the kingdom of heaven" (*dan so groß und so edel ist der mensch, das er*

¹² DW III, 104–25.

¹³ BT Vff.

gottes bilt nus tregt und ein erb ist des reichs gottes).¹⁴ Drawing on the Bible, Eckhart, and Paracelsus, Weigel's inward turn was not only learned but clearly also egalitarian in its anti-authoritarian thrust.

Weigel's mystical-devotional treatise *On Prayer* (*Vom Gebet*) illustrates for us how the seemingly contradictory sources and impulses of his thought are united in a scheme that is both hierarchical and egalitarian, and in which references to Meister Eckhart are the paradoxical apex of a conceptual framework. Though hard to date, *On Prayer* consists of materials and concepts that summarize and extend Weigel's early devotional and theoretical work. The psychology of 16th-century religious belief is incorporated into a hierarchical construct borrowed from a tradition that includes Pseudo-Dionysius, Tauler, and the *Theologia Germanica*. There are the spiritual beginners who fear the punishments of hell and the spiritual intermediate ones who are not only mindful of the eternal darkness but also pray for eternal reward in heaven; finally, there are the complete and practiced Christians who serve God, not out of fear of punishment or hope of reward, but simply out of love for the eternal Good. Forgetting about their own souls, they then find in Christ eternal life (ZW 4, 125). In its development, *On Prayer* incorporates allusions to sources ranging from Plato and Proclus to Paracelsus. Both Luther and the medieval Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides contribute to an anti-authoritarian notion of the ubiquity of God, which is also an egalitarian notion of the kingdom of heaven within. Eckhart is a key source for the account of the complete ones who are no longer mindful of punishment or reward but love justice in the way the living love life, without asking why or wherefore (ZW 4, 168). Weigel's crowning Eckhartian concept of the soul that abandons all for the sake of God and is thereupon filled with God (ZW 4, 172–83) certainly matches many traditional expectations of how a mystic should write or speak. But before the treatise ends, its conclusions are fully integrated into two non-mystical spheres of concern. On the one hand, *On Prayer* is truly about prayer. It remains a devotional tract addressed to common Lutheran practices of piety. On the other hand, it presents itself as the synthesis and answer to the historical thesis and antithesis of Protestant theology, the dispute over whether human free will contributes something or nothing to conversion and grace: "both sects have something right to which they adhere, [but] the rest is false and lies with which they

¹⁴ Paracelsus, *Sämtliche Werke, Abteilung 1* (*Medizinische, naturwissenschaftliche und philosophische Schriften*), vol. 13, ed. Karl Sudhoff (Munich: 1931), 296.

garnish and mix the truth; [and] because they are blinded by the letter [of Scripture], they can never become one" (*beede Secten haben etwas rechtes daran sie hangen, das ander ist falsch vnd lügen, damit sie die warheit spicken vnd vermischen, darumb weil sie auch von dem todten Buchstaben verblindet sein, mogen sie nimmer eins werden*—ZW 4, 220). We can imagine the German lay folk, terrorized by the threats of hell that were evoked by the rival doctrinal parties that became dominant with successive princes. Against this terrorization of souls, Pastor Weigel advises his troubled people to seek consolation within by rising above both fear and longing in order to contemplate the good *as good in itself*, just as life is good in itself. What appears to us as esoterically mystical, nourished by sources going back beyond Meister Eckhart to Pseudo-Dionysius, was for the pastor and his followers with ears to hear nothing less than the advice of a Bible-braced common sense, telling them to relax and judge matters for themselves.

To be sure, this voice had been confirmed on the highest authority by the Apostle Paul's rapture—as Weigel says—by "this divine darkness" (*dieser göttlichen finsternuß*), of which "as Paul said, 'I did not know whether I was conscious in body, [for only] God knew this'" (*da er sprach, ob ich im leib wache oder nit So weiß ich nit, gott weiß es*—PW 4, 213). Weigel referred here to what had been the locus classicus of mystical psychology at least since Saint Augustine: Paul's "rapture" into a "third heaven" (2 Cor. 12:2) understood as attainment of an intellectual or angelic knowledge that transcends human sensory and rational knowledge. We cannot recover the psychological content of Weigel's experiences, but we can ascertain that he was interpreting the Pauline locus classicus following the sense accorded it by Eckhart: "in this [state] the spirit has drawn all [its] powers into itself, so that it forgets life completely; in it neither memory nor understanding are active, nor the senses, nor [other] powers; and thereupon [Paul] was in the third heaven" (*da hat der geist alle Creffte in sich gezogen, das er des lebens gantz vergeß, da würckete weder gedechtnus noch verstandnus, noch die Sinne noch Creffte, vnd da war er im 3ten himel*—PW 4, 213–14). Following Eckhart's sense of it, this condition becomes for Weigel the determination of the human being: "The human creature should soar up like an eagle, above all creatures and transcend time and place, and immerse itself in the unknown and unfathomable darkness and unfamiliarity of God" (*Der mentsch sol sich aufschwingen, wie Ein Adler über alle geschöpf vnd überhupfen Zeit vnd orth vnd sich versencken in die vnbekandte grundtlose finsternus der vnbekantheit gottes*—ZW 4, 214).

We should not leap to the conclusion that Weigel was describing his own practices of transcendental meditation. Every word or turn of phrase in these passages was transported to him by currents of a tradition that

he knew as such. Its sources were thoroughly and explicitly familiar to him as literature. At the same time, we also need to remind ourselves that as readers we know that our own experience of reading literature results in our ecstatic experiencing of the thoughts and feelings of others which have been carried to us across great distances of time by repetition and restatement. There is a frame of mind in which we forget ourselves in reading. When we see our own image in what we read, commonplaces take on a life of their own.

Even prior to the 1577 Lutheran Formula of Concord, Weigel's sources had been fully integrated and his main ideas clearly articulated. By signing the Formula, however reluctantly, Weigel helped establish the place of his work on the wrong side of the watershed separating the relatively free-spirited earlier Reformation from a conformist age of confessionalism. The latter should not be treated prejudicially or in a one-sided fashion; but among other and better things, the period of confessionalization was a great age of dogmatic intolerance and religious war. Two of Weigel's most articulate treatises of the pre- and post-Formula watershed period are *On the Place of the World* (1576) and *The Golden Grasp* (1578). They are available in translation in my volume of *Valentin Weigel's Selected Spiritual Writings*. They offer a well-rounded synthesis of Weigel's ideas as they matured and congealed around the outer pole of his vision of the cosmos and the inner of his theory of the faculty of knowing.

As it happens, the fuller synthesis and interpretation of sources in those later works make it difficult to separate out the influence of Meister Eckhart. However, his impact should not be judged any less because its seeds had by then shed their verbatim husks and come to fruition in a new conceptual context. Weigel's original thinking is informed by Eckhart and yet, at the same time, it is distinct and original. Eckhart's work had its own strong epistemological bent, associated with the scriptural and philosophical concept of image. Weigel shares this epistemological bent and the preoccupation with the image, but he presents the activity of knowing more deliberately and with greater emphasis on a subjectivism which stresses that, notwithstanding the essential role of the object, seeing is in the eye and knowing in the mind.

Medieval and Renaissance Neoplatonic thought developed a hierarchy of the elements, the astral or angelic intelligences, and the divine Being. Weigel took advantage of tendencies inherent in this hierarchy in order to reconfigure the ascending hierarchy. The uppermost is reconceived primarily as innermost. Historians of philosophy must draw their finer distinctions, but in the grand panorama of the history of ideas, Weigel's inward turn points in the direction of Kant. As a philosopher's philosopher,

Kant may be too remote from the dissenting theoretician to offer more than the most general points of comparison. Their inwardness in either case shifted authority to the individual.

Several subsequent figures are closer to Weigel in the panorama that extends from him down to us. His synthesis of Paracelsian natural philosophy and Renaissance cosmology was echoed and in some measure also shared by the mystical philosophy or philosophical mysticism of Jacob Boehme (1575–1624). However, Boehme's work is such a rich reservoir of received ideas that it is impossible to distinguish all the currents and sources, especially when it is not merely a matter of tracing Weigel, but the Eckhartism in Weigel. The same can be said of Angelus Silesius. We could present several of his paradoxical couplets as reformulations of Weigel's words: "For God wants to take the human being to himself and to be all in all, yet not without the human being: the human being can accomplish nothing without God; and God does not want to [do so] without the human being. Therefore God behaves actively and the human being [should] behave passively" (*Dann Gott will den Menschen gar an sich nehmen vnd alles in allem sein / doch nicht ohne den Menschen / der Mensch vermag nichts ohne Gott / vnd Gott will nicht ohne den Menschen / drumh helt sich Gott wirklich vnd der Mensch leidlich*—ZW 3, 112). We can compare this for example with Silesius' famous couplet, "God does not live without me":

I know that without me God cannot live an instant,
If I come to naught, he must for want give up the ghost.

*Gott lebt nicht ohne mich.
Ich weiß, daß ohne mich Gott nicht ein Nun kan leben /
Werd' ich zu nicht Er muß von Noth den Geist aufgeben.*

If the formulations of Weigel and Silesius are compatible, Silesius' mystical gems were extracted from deeper and broader currents of tradition and polished to a degree that rendered their proximate sources irrelevant. Eckhart's contribution to the tradition out of which Boehme and Silesius drew their literary materials was undoubtedly extensive, but it was also derivative of more ancient sources and mediated by more varied tributary currents.

Since the mystical tradition is a tradition of literature and ideas, we need to recognize that Weigel and those who preceded and followed him were drawing on common sources in order to come to terms with similar conflicts and quandaries. The materials of Christian tradition and its philosophical accoutrements contained elements both universal and exclusive. Confronted with the irreconcilable contradictions between contending

doctrines and confessions, Weigel carried the universalist and internalist elements to an extreme in order to transcend the contradictions in the temporal world. He countered violent exclusivism with irenic universalism. He shifted the authority of faith radically inward, thereby rendering historical distinctions moot and eliminating the literalist regime of rewards and punishments that bolstered all the doctrinal allegiances.

The greatest literary mind of the German Enlightenment was Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–81). He was a graduate of Weigel's princely St Afra's School in Meissen, as well as the universities in Leipzig and Wittenberg attended by Weigel. Like his precursor, Lessing was trained in theology, to which he likewise took a critical approach, quarreling bitterly and openly with literalist opponents among the orthodox Lutherans of his time. Like Weigel, Lessing also left behind a moral testament. In his *On the Education of the Human Race* (*Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts*, 1780), Lessing foretold the advent of an ethical Christianity or Christian Enlightenment of the Spirit in which human beings would do good not out of fear of punishment or hope for rewards, but out of love of the good for its own sake. No less than Weigel, Lessing understood this transformation as the oblique fulfillment of the medieval Joachite prophesies of the coming final age that had stirred intellectual ferment in the epoch of Dante and Meister Eckhart. The conceptualization of a coming moral condition in which human beings would rise above their creatural selves by doing what is good irrespective of rewards and punishments is essential to the long and multifaceted tradition of Eckhart, Weigel, and Lessing. We should be able to understand why this message had to be encased in puzzling paradoxes and labyrinthine theoretical explications. We are no more capable now than were people in the day of Eckhart or Weigel of asserting an ethic of the good as a self-evident feature of our common morality.¹⁵

¹⁵ Of value in pursuing the contexts of Eckhart and Weigel in the tradition of German intellectual history are G. Baring, "Valentin Weigel und die *Deutsche Theologie*," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 55, 1 (1964), 5–17; Gabriele Bosch, *Reformatorisches Denken und frühneuzeitliches Philosophieren. Eine vergleichende Studie zu Martin Luther und Valentin Weigel* (Dissertation, University of Giessen: 1998); Siegfried Wollgast, *Philosophie in Deutschland zwischen Reformation und Aufklärung, 1550–1650* (ch. 9, "Valentin Weigel") (Berlin: 1988); Winfried Zeller, "Eckhartiana V. Meister Eckhart bei Valentin Weigel. Eine Untersuchung zur Bedeutung Meister Eckharts für die mystische Renaissance des sechzehnten Jahrhunderts," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 3 Folge 8, 57: Heft 3/4 (1938), 309–55; Nikolaus Largier, *Bibliographie zu Meister Eckhart, (Dokimion)*, (Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie) 9 (Fribourg: 1989); and Freia Odermatt, *Der Himmel in uns: Das Selbstverständnis des Seelsorgers Valentin Weigel (1533–1588)*, in *Deutsche Literatur von den Anfängen bis 1700*, ed. Alois M. Haas et al. (Berlin: 2008).

ECKHART RECEPTION IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Cyril O'Regan

The beginning of the 19th century in Germany is marked both by a reassessment of the nature and scope of philosophy and the prospects for a culturally viable form of Christianity. While the two defining high-culture moments, that is, romanticism and idealism, are complex, variegated, and sometimes even contradictory phenomena, they are united by their negative response to the Enlightenment view of knowledge and Kant's response to it, which at once extends and limits the Enlightenment by placing severe limits on knowledge with a view to creating a space for faith. Hölderlin and Novalis, the Schlegel brothers, but also Fichte and Hegel, Schelling, and Franz von Baader continue the development and correction of the Enlightenment while trying to overcome what they perceive to be Kant's truncation and attenuation of both faith and thought. Each thinker fashions an alternative: a poetic alternative in the case of Hölderlin and Novalis, an aesthetic alternative in the case of the Schlegel brothers, and essentially philosophical alternatives in the case of the three German idealists and Baader, which involves serious reflection on the possibility as well as the actuality of Christianity.

Despite the general assumption that philosophy proceeds without appeal to the past, a gradually emerging feature in the work of all, especially in the idealists and Baader, is the search for precedents. Given their shared view of the problematic nature of both modern and classical philosophy, and their common perception of the cultural decline of Christianity, encouraged in large part by its penchant for dogmatism and reactionary political practice, such precedents are perceived to be more likely found along the margins rather than in the main lines of the Western intellectual and religious traditions; thus, the appeal, for example, of ancient Neoplatonism to Hegel and Schelling,¹ and the even odder appeal

¹ The scholar who has most extensively and deeply analyzed German idealism's repetition of Neoplatonism is Werner Beierwaltes. See especially his *Platonismus und Idealismus* (Frankfurt: 1967) and *Denken des Eines: Studien zur neuplatonische Philosophie und ihrer Wirkungsgeschichte* (Frankfurt: 1985). Hegel speaks at some length about Plotinus and Proclus in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. See *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 2, trans. E.S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson (Lincoln, Nebr.: 1995; reprinted

of the Kabbalah.² Enjoying even greater favor was the Lutheran mystic Jacob Boehme (1575–1624), who makes it into the historical hall of fame of both the romantic and idealist camps. The work of the shoemaker from Gorlitz was embraced by Novalis and the Schlegel brothers, as well as by Hegel and Schelling, and von Baader. The appropriation of Boehme was more or less serious, but in the case of the last three named it went well beyond an enthusiasm for the esoteric, even German esoteric. The presentation of Boehme's texts and their interpretation occupies a considerable portion of Baader's *Collected Works*.³ Moreover, Baader's own reflections on God, the world, human beings, and their relation is so massively influenced by the work of Boehme that Baader deserves the handle of *Boehmius redivivus* applied to him in his own lifetime. While Schelling is never quite so forthright as Baader about the influence that Boehme exerts on his work, texts such as the *Essay on Human Freedom* (1809) and *The Ages of the World* (1815) are impossible to understand outside the context of this influence.⁴ Although the influence of Boehme on the thought of Hegel does not quite rise to this level, not only is the prominence that Hegel gives Boehme in the history of modern philosophy worth noting,

from the original 1894 translation published in London by Kegan Paul), 404–31 (*Werke* 19, 435–65); 432–50 (*Werke*, 466–86). The very fact that Hegel devotes almost 50 pages to Neoplatonism is eloquent as to just how important it is for him. See also my *The Heterodox Hegel* (Albany, N.Y.: 1994), 101–06, 111–12, 133–34, 175–80. In any event, the relation between Hegel and Proclus was sufficiently well established in Hegel reception for Ludwig Feuerbach to christen Hegel “the German Proclus.” (See *Platonismus und Idealismus*, 107). In addition to Beierwaltes, who thoroughly explores both the history of Schelling's reading of Neoplatonic thinkers and his repetition of their themes, see Michael G. Vater, “Schelling's Neoplatonic System-Notion,” in *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, ed. R.B. Harris (Norfolk: 1975), 275–99.

² For Hegel and the Kabbalah, see *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 2, 394–96. See my essay, “Hegel and Anti-Judaism: Narrative and the Inner Circulation of the Kabbalah,” in *Owl of Minerva* (Spring 1997), 141–82. For a short, concise account of the Kabbalah in Schelling, see Edward Allen Beach, *The Potencies of God: Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology* (Albany, N.Y.: 1994), 69–72. If the work of the 18th-century Pietist, F.C. Oetinger is not the direct source for Hegel and Schelling, it is his particular rendition of Christian Kabbalah, calculated to combat modern rationalism, which provides the warrant for the enlisting of that esoteric discourse for all subsequent speculative thinkers. The most important work of Oetinger is *Die Lehrtafel der Prinzessin Antonia*, 2 vols., ed. Richard Breymayer and Friedrich Häussermann (Berlin: 1977).

³ See Franz von Baader, *Sämtliche Werke*, 16 vols., ed. Franz Hoffmann et al. (Leipzig: 1851–60). [Hereafter, this will be referred to as SW.] See especially volumes 2, 3, and 13 in which major texts of Jacob Boehme are explicated and recommended.

⁴ The definitive account of the relationship between Jacob Boehme and the “later” Schelling is provided by Robert F. Brown. See his *The Later Schelling: The Influence of Boehme on the Works of 1809–1815* (Lewisburg, Pa.: 1972). See also Edward Allen Beach, *The Potencies of God* (note 2 above).

but also the ways in which the *Phenomenology* (1807) and *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (1821–31) recall such central features of Boehme's thought as a dynamic view of the Trinity as a theogonic process and the view of creation as evil, since it is best defined as God's other.⁵

The penchant of romanticism and idealism for retrieving premodern speculative forms of thought with a view to dealing with the crisis of thought and the decline of the authority of Christianity went well beyond the retrieval of Boehme. Boehme was one instance of the kind of premodern "speculative" thinker recommended by romanticism and idealism as providing at once a contrast with the epistemological nervelessness of post-Kantian thought and the enervated modes of Christianity that were available, and the fideistic strategy of a thinker such as Jacobi who was prepared to make the *salto mortale* of faith.⁶ Another example was provided by Meister Eckhart (1260–1324), whose textual situation was much more unclear than Boehme (whose collected works were in circulation at the beginning of the 19th century) and whose status was more ambiguous, given his pre-Reformation context. Even in the heyday of the recovery of Eckhart by German romantics and idealists, it cannot be said that Eckhart's works were very well known. It would not be a great exaggeration to say that, by and large, "Eckhart" functioned as a trope for the "speculative," which in its adaptation of the language of "mirror" or "mirroring" (Latin—*speculum*) warranted a high view of the self and knowledge,⁷ validated an intimacy between philosophy and religion that the Enlightenment had destroyed and Kant had been unable to rehabilitate, and persuaded that some biblical texts were redolent of a wisdom that made the distinction between philosophy and Christianity indifferent. If the story of the reception of Eckhart in the 19th century is essentially a German story, it is a story connected in a crucial way with the appropriation of speculative mysticism by German idealism, and by its followers and critics. By mid-century, it was respectable to claim that Hegel's thought represented a

⁵ See *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, 188–216; Cyril O'Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel* (Albany, N.Y.: 1994), 93–94, 118–19, 131, 138–39, and 150–55.

⁶ Hegel was not the only one who inveighed against F.H. Jacobi's view of faith as a "leap"—Fichte and Baader did also—but he was, arguably, the most severe. His early essay in *Glauben und Wissen* (1801) essentially defined the relationship once and for all. See *Faith and Knowledge*, trans. Walter Cerf and H.S. Harris (Albany, N.Y.: 1981), 97–153.

⁷ For an astute account of what unites and divides the German idealist understanding of "speculation" and its relation to "reflection" from that of medieval thought, see Rodolphe Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection* (Cambridge: 1986), 43–45.

reprise of the mysticism of Meister Eckhart.⁸ And, by mid-century, while it continued to be counterintuitive, it was not unheard of to find Fichte and Eckhart mentioned in the same breath. Needless to say, the interest in the association in each case was not merely historical. What moved declarations of the connection was the interest in marking off the difference of Hegelian and Fichtean thought from the surrounding intellectual environments which did not value thought highly enough and accepted or rejected Christianity on the assumptions that neither speculation nor experience were native to Christian faith. But, as Ernst Benz in particular has brought to our attention,⁹ the connection is distinctly in line with nationalist views about the importance of German thought, and, indeed, Germany as a nation of philosophical thinkers, and the nature of German philosophical language to whose vocabulary the mystical tradition had contributed mightily.

In any story of the 19th-century reception of Eckhart, then, Hegel and Fichte come to the fore. At the same time, however, around this core, it is important to treat of figures who, while they acknowledged the cultural and philosophical importance of idealist appropriation and to a significant extent vindicated it, also contested it, and specifically questioned whether idealist appropriation compromised the Christian assumptions that are the bedrock in Meister Eckhart and the mystical tradition that devolves from him. The two most important of these figures are the romantic Catholic thinker, Franz von Baader, and the rationalist Lutheran thinker, Hans L. Martensen. These figures are important, however, not only because they offer a kind of theological commentary on German idealist appropriation of Eckhart, but because they themselves are involved in recommending the medieval mystic to the philosophical and theological elites. An essential aspect of the recommendation involves significant citation of Eckhart's text, something done extremely rarely by Hegel, and not at all by Fichte. In the case of Martensen, citation peaks in the presentation of a selection of Eckhartianisms that both guide and legitimate an interpretation of medieval mysticism.¹⁰ Nevertheless, even in his case, the historical interest is not as dominant as it will be in Pfeiffer in the second part of

⁸ This is a point made by Wolfram Malte-Fues. See *Mystik als Erkenntnis? Kritische Studien zur Eckhart-Forschung* (Bonn: 1981), 45–49. The names of Carl Schmidt and Karl Rosenkranz are mentioned. The latter is, of course, a well-known right-wing Hegelian who popularized Hegel after his death.

⁹ Benz, *Les sources*, 14–17.

¹⁰ By "Eckhartianisms" I mean to include sayings that modern critical scholarship would now attribute to Tauler or Suso or the *German Theology*.

the 19th century and thereafter in Eckhart commentary, a process which reaches its conclusion in Quint's critical edition in the 20th century. The twin interest of taking account of the idealist appropriation and its criticism justifies any number of orders of treatment. I propose, however, to pair Baader with Hegel on the medieval mystic, since they critically engage each other, and to pair Martensen with Fichte, for Martensen is in fact the first thinker of substance who associates Fichte and Eckhart. In the case of the former couple I begin with the religious thinker from whom Hegel learns much more about Eckhart than the single citation in his work would entitle us to believe, and end with Martensen, who only reluctantly criticizes Hegel's style of Eckhart reception as he gestures to Fichte as an alternative trajectory.

FRANZ VON BAADER (1765–1841)

In the 19th century, arguably, no one played quite so significant a role in the retrieval of Eckhart as Franz von Baader.¹¹ This was not so much because of the level of his acquaintance with the texts of Eckhart or broadly speaking the Eckhartian tradition, which included Tauler and the 15th-century *German Theology* often attributed to Tauler, but quite likely not written by him. In this respect Baader must cede pride of place to Hans Martensen. Nor does Baader's importance depend on his being the first religious thinker to appropriate Eckhart with a view to enlarging the scope of philosophy, rehabilitating Christianity, and fashioning or refashioning a positive relation between the discourses of philosophy and Christianity, and both and common culture. Arguably, Fichte is a contender here. One reason why Baader is crucial is that the duration of his engagement with Eckhart surpasses that of any other religious thinker in the German-speaking world of the 19th century. Commencing in the first decade of the 19th century, this engagement reaches a high point in the 1820s in Baader's dealings with both Schelling and Hegel, and continues basically until the end of his life. Another reason is that Baader is a witness as to how the idealists respond to Christian mystics, especially mystics of the German tradition, and an illuminating evaluator as to whether the quite different species of mystical thought of Boehme and Eckhart have been successfully adopted or not. This issue is not decided on philosophical grounds alone,

¹¹ This is the view advocated by Benz in *Les sources*, 28–32, and seconded by Malte-Fues in *Mystik als Erkenntnis*, 35–51.

although Baader is one with the idealist in preferring a holistic and/or coherentist view of truth over the correspondence view of the classical tradition and Kant's constructivist view. Theological considerations play at least an equal role in that, while Baader thinks of the Christian mystical tradition as stretching basic Christian perceptions about God and creation, he does not think that the mystics fundamentally break with the broad Christian tradition or contravene any of its basic axioms.

According to Baader, Meister Eckhart is a "speculative" religious thinker of the medieval period (SW8, 199). Indeed, as a very late text has it, Eckhart is the very best of such thinkers (SW 15, 457). Recognizing that being "medieval" suffers in contemporary German (largely Protestant) culture both from a chronological and intellectual disadvantage, Baader suggests that Eckhart is conditionally the match for the post-Reformation speculative mystic, Boehme, who in Baader's view rightly exercises enormous influence on romantic and idealist thought, and, indeed, also on his own which critically engages with both. Baader avers that had Eckhart lived in the post-Reformation period, he would have equaled or even surpassed Boehme (SW15, 159). Given his extraordinarily high opinion of Boehme, and especially how impressed he is with Boehme on a range of topics, from his dynamic view of God and his highly articulate Christology to his view of creation and the origin and nature of evil, it is more than likely that Baader is indulging in hyperbole. Stripped down, Baader's encomium can be reduced to saying that where Eckhart does not reinforce the mystical proposal of Boehme¹²—which Baader advocates as something of a panacea—he complements him. Without making the point directly, Baader suggests that Eckhart's strengths as a speculative thinker lie in the opposite direction to those of Boehme, who currently is funding the *Naturphilosophie* resurgence in German thought.¹³ Specifically, these strengths lie in religiosity (SW5, 263). Baader understands well that the essential meaning

¹² The issue here is solely one of influence, or potential influence, in the modern setting. On the evidence before him, Baader presumes that Boehme is more likely to be granted an audience. He sees clearly that Schelling's *Spätphilosophie* is determined by Boehme. Moreover, he realizes that Boehme has been an intellectual presence throughout the 18th century in a way that Eckhart was not. He is familiar with the work of the 18th-century Pietist, Friedrich Christoph Oetinger, who avails of Boehme to critique much of the then current natural or philosophical theology that was ultimately based, in his view, on Spinoza rather than Leibniz.

¹³ For a good discussion of this aspect of Baader's thought, see Thomas F. O'Meara, *Romantic Idealism and Roman Catholicism: Schelling and the Theologians* (Notre Dame: 1982), 70–81.

of religion is indicated in the Latin term “religare,” which means to bind or to bond, thus suggesting a relation of extraordinary intimacy between human being (or human soul) and the divine considered as transcendent. Baader does not allow the then current views about religion as constituted by feeling (*Gefühl*) to influence his reading of Eckhart. Rather, he views the religiosity of Eckhart to function critically with respect to this form of religiousness which, if it finds classical expression in Schleiermacher, is in his view all too widespread in German Romantic thought (SW8, 207). He worries that the Schleiermachian view neither pays sufficient respect to the cognitive nor to the developmental dimensions of religion. He also worries whether what he takes to be its binary mentality, which sunders reason and emotion, represents more a refusal to deal with the rationalism of modernity than a critical engagement with it that might be able to preserve reason by showing the way beyond it. Eckhart represents a sober alternative to the seductions of feeling and affect, while offering a view of reason (*Vernunft*) that does not ignore, as calculative reason does, the depth and breadth of religious relation. Not untypically, Baader will parse religiosity in terms of the spousal relation of the medieval mystical tradition (SW7, 153). At one level, Baader’s interest is simply to underscore the intimacy of this relation and its existential importance. At the same time, interpreting religiosity by means of “marriage” reflects a fundamental interpretive decision made by Baader: while Eckhart is *primus inter pares* of medieval mystics (SW14, 93), he is not idiosyncratic. He can and should be read in the context of Tauler and the *Theologica Germanica* of the 15th century as well as Flemish mysticism of the 14th (SW8, 300).¹⁴ Baader, quite obviously, has no interest in separating Eckhart out from this broader pattern of medieval mysticism, which he tends to view as constraining how Eckhart should be interpreted. Specifically, the broader historical contextualization of Eckhart, which interprets him in light of the tradition of thought for which he is an important source, effects a smoothing of Eckhart’s more jagged hyperbolic edges, which suggests a negative relation to the received theological tradition. The consequence of this smoothing in turn provides the basic ground rules when the important issue arises as to whether Eckhart should be interpreted in a theistic or pantheistic fashion. Decontextualizing Eckhart aids and abets the kind

¹⁴ Martensen, as we shall see shortly, follows the same tack, with the exception that he excludes rather than includes Flemish mysticism. He affects a particular disdain for Ruysbroeck.

of enlisting in the service of pantheism effected by Hegel, for the German idealist does not have to deal with the question of theological parameters which are given as much in the broader tradition influenced by Eckhart than in Eckhart himself, whose very genius may tend to obscure what these are.

It is worth remarking that Baader defines Eckhart's contribution to contemporary thought largely in terms of anthropology, rather than, for example, in terms of the doctrine of God. Although Baader will put into play such terms as *Ungrund* and *Grund*, and will speak of the *Gottesgeburt*, the meaning of these terms is usually supplied by Boehme's view of a dynamic voluntarist developmental God rather than by reflection on Eckhart's parsing of the relation between Godhead and God, and Godhead and Trinity. For Baader, Eckhart's mystical anthropology could play a key role in mitigating the disastrous disjunction between appearance and thing-in-itself that is constitutive of Kant's critical project (SW2, 327–28). The issue with Kant was not so much with Kant's rendering the finitude of the self and its knowledge, as with his particular inflection of finitude. This self is devoid of a self-transcending dynamic, or at least of any such dynamic being capable of justification. Moreover, knowledge seems to move exclusively within the bounds of sense. Remembering the high view of the self and its knowledge held by a "speculative" thinker assisted Baader, as it did, in a different way, the idealists, in going beyond Kant, who in Baader's view conceded much too much to Enlightenment skepticism.

Of special importance was Baader's recall of the "image of God" motif (SW8, 291; SW7, 193; also SW3, 245).¹⁵ Needless to say, Baader is well aware that Eckhart is by no means unique in his recurrence to this "image" motif, which is a constant throughout the Christian tradition, and especially in Christian Neoplatonic circles. Indeed, from the point of view of persuading a culture to take up its sapiential task and to overcome the narrowness of its theological presuppositions and philosophical conclusions, it would not help his case to make Eckhart an eccentric. Baader frames Eckhart's notion of image not so much by referring to its history, which centrally would involve referring to Augustine and the Dionysian tradition, as seeing Eckhart as an example—maybe *the* example—of a wider swathe of

¹⁵ Malte-Fues underscores the importance of Eckhart's image theology for Baader with some justification. See *Mystik als Erkenntnis*, 44. See especially DW XIV, XVIIb, XL, XLVI, LXIX, LXX for particularly clear articulations of Eckhart's notion of image.

medieval mystical thought significantly influenced by him. This framing acts as a constraint, even when, or especially when, Baader avails of the foundational aspects of Eckhart's theology of image such as "spark" (*Funklein*) (SW11, 184), divine sonship (SW13, 389), divine birth (SW3, 248; SW14, 150),¹⁶ and the intimacy of time and eternity (SW1, 273; also SW10, 116, 224) for his own constructive program. It matters greatly to Baader, however, whether the constructive program in which Eckhart's mystical theology is enlisted is broadly theistic or pantheistic. Initially enthusiastic about Hegel's embrace of mystical thinkers such as Eckhart and Boehme, Baader gradually came to the conclusion that in idealism Eckhartian mysticism becomes fundamentally distorted (SW15, 455; see also SW2, 404–05).¹⁷ This is especially the case in the idealist articulation of the notion of the image of God. Whereas for a medieval thinker like Eckhart, in the final analysis, the reason, which is more than calculative or demonstrative reason, or what might be called ecstatic and participatory reason (*Vernunft*), represents (*repräsentiert*) the divine rather than reproduces it, in idealism reason actually reproduces (*reproduziert*) the divine (SW2, 454).¹⁸ Without feeling obliged to demonstrate his interpretive position, Baader insists that a doctrine of creation is operative in Eckhart's work and should be used as the hermeneutic lens through which to analyze some of his bolder metaphysical statements.¹⁹ There is in fact an "unbridgeable difference" (*unüberbrückbare Differenz*) between the divine and the human.²⁰ In Hegelian thought all mystery is obliterated, as is the very alterity of the divine which is the condition of the possibility of the mystical.

¹⁶ Considering the poverty of his textual situation, he does well in isolating divine birth, sonship, and spark as the central anthropological mystical core of Eckhart's work. Most contemporary interpreters of Eckhart would underscore the importance of these elements. For *Gottesgeburt* and sonship, see especially DW Vb, VI, X, XII, XIV, XXI, XXII, XXIX, XXX, XXXIX, XL, LIX. For *Funklein*, see DW II, XII, XXII, XXIV, XXIX, LXIX, LXXVI.

¹⁷ See also Malte-Fues, *Mystik als Erkenntnis*, 35–36.

¹⁸ Malte-Fues, *Mystik als Erkenntnis*, 35.

¹⁹ For the separation of Baader and Hegel on the point of ontological distinction between the creator and created, see Eugène Susini, *Franz von Baader et le romantisme mystique*, 2 vols (Paris: 1942), 465–71. Interestingly, in order to make this point, Baader does not call upon a strong doctrine of creation from nothing. The reasons are obvious: unlike Thomas, Eckhart does not have much use for the doctrine; and Baader thinks that the same point can be made in another vocabulary, indeed, one largely drawn from another mystic, that is, Jacob Boehme.

²⁰ See *Mystik als Erkenntnis*, 36; also Susini, *Franz von Baader*, vol. 2, 283–301; 507–16; vol. 3, 287–98, 344ff.

For Baader, then, a serious commitment to the ontological distinction between the ground of the existent and the existent goes hand in hand with the affirmation of the ultimate mysteriousness of the ground. Explicitly to renege on one is to suggest that one has compromised on the other. The fact that in his judgement Eckhart never gainsays the mystery of the divine, indeed, does everything to underscore it, earns Eckhart the presumption in his favor when it comes to the view of creation, however risqué Eckhart's mode of expression. Not so Hegel. Baader does believe that there are irresponsible forms of apophysis; these include not only the fideism of Jacobi, but also a kind of emphasis on mystery which is not balanced by an equal emphasis on revelation. It is Jacob Boehme who provides the norm of balance here. But in this respect Eckhart cannot be separated from Boehme. In any event it is Eckhart who provides much of the basic vocabulary of Boehme's more objective or theosophic brand of mysticism and the basic outline of a number of its major inflections on the theme of dynamic divine self-expression.²¹ The twinning of Boehme and Eckhart essentially doubles the critical power with respect to the Enlightenment and Kant, and especially strengthens the view of the nature of reason which has profound consequences with respect to the view of the nature of philosophy, Christianity, and their relation. But the twinning of Boehme and Eckhart along the "speculative" edges of Christianity specifically doubles its critical power against Hegel, who appeals to both and construes his speculative philosophy as not only continuing these enterprises by other means, but as effectively realizing them. For Baader, while reason is expansive, it is not absolute; inspired with the eros for infinity that is a sign of the presence of the infinite in the knower, the knower is not yet infinite.

²¹ Although Eckhart is undoubtedly mediated through sources such as Tauler and the *German Theology*, Boehme depends on and deploys the Eckhartian vocabulary of *Gottheit*, *Nichts*, *Überwessentliche*, *Wesen*, *Urgrund*, *Grund*, *Bild*, *Abbild*, *Schiedlichkeit* in texts such as *Mysterium Magnum* and *Six Theosophic Points*. But the relationship goes deeper than vocabulary. Eckhart's endpoint essentially functions as Boehme's starting point, as Boehme, along a Trinitarian axis, effects a reversal of fundamental Eckhartian priorities: the Godhead over God; unity over division; unity over differentiation; silence over word. But, in doing so, Boehme can capitalize on these tendencies in Eckhart's own work. For a good discussion of some important lexical and semantic connections between Eckhart and Boehme, see Virginie Pektas, *Mystique et philosophie: Grunt, abgrunt et ungrunt chez Maître Eckhart et Jacob Böhme* (Amsterdam: 2006).

G.W.F. HEGEL (1770–1831)

That there is a relation between Hegel and Meister Eckhart, and that the relation is fundamentally positive, is by now an established convention.²² It is an open question as to when Hegel came into contact with Eckhartian material. Some scholars follow Hegel's student, Karl Rosenkrantz, in attributing knowledge of this tradition to the earliest period of Hegel's thought (1795–99).²³ However this claim is viewed, there is relative consensus concerning the authenticity of Baader's report that he and Hegel had an ongoing colloquy on Eckhart in the winter semester of 1823–24, whose climax is represented by Hegel's exclamation to the famous passage on the "eye" condemned by papal bull in 1329: *das haben wir es ja, was wir wollen*.²⁴ The reliability of Baader's recollection is reinforced by Hegel, who in fact cites (loosely) the passage in the 1824 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*: "The eye with which God sees me is the same eye by which I see him, my eye and God's eye are one and the same" (LPR1, G248; E347–48).²⁵ For Hegel, then, an Eckhartian apothegm sums up an epistemological confidence that challenges both modernity's nerveless rationalism and its fideistic counterpoint. However more committed to the ongoing process of its realization, Hegel is convinced that Eckhart has presented the ideal

²² As well as Benz, *Les sources*, 27–31, and Malte-Fues, *Mystik als Erkenntnis*, 35–51, see also: Piero Coda, *Il negativo e la trinità: ipotesi su Hegel* (Rome: 1987), 73–81; Cyril O'Regan, "Hegelian Philosophy of Religion and Eckhartian Mysticism," in *New Perspectives on Hegel's Philosophy of Religion* (Albany, N.Y.: 1992), 109–29; G. Ralfs, "Lebensformen des Geistes. Meister Eckhart und Hegel," in *Kant Studien* supplement 86 (1964); Donata Schoeller, *Gottesgeburt und Selbstbeusstsein. Denken der Einheit bei Meister Eckhart und G. W. F. Hegel* (Hildesheim/Berlin: 1992); Theodor Steinbüchel, "Mystik und Idealismus, Meister Eckhart und Hegel," *Universitas* 2 (1974), 1409–23; W. Schultz, "Der Einfluss der deutschen Mystik auf Hegels Philosophie," in *Theologie und Wirklichkeit* (Kiel: 1969), 147–77.

²³ See H.S. Harris, *Hegel's Development: Towards the Sunlight, 1770–1801* (Oxford: 1972), 230–31. Harris notes that Rosenkranz makes his claim in "Hegels ursprüngliches System 1798–1806" in *Literarhistorisches Taschenbuch*, vol. 2 ed. R.E. Prutz (1844), reprinted in *Hegel Studien*, 10 (1975), 133–35.

²⁴ Baader, SW 17, 158–9; Benz, *Les sources*, 12, 27; Malte-Fues, *Mystik als Erkenntnis*, 33–44.

²⁵ The passage condemned in the papal bull of 1329 reads as follows: "The eye in which I see God is the same eye in which God sees me. My eye and God's eye are one eye, and one seeing, knowing, and loving." Hegel's quotation is reasonably exact, although he leaves out the qualifier that begins with "and one seeing." This passage is extracted from DW XII. The English translation that I am using for *The Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* is that by Peter Hodgson (Berkeley: 1984–85). [LPR refers to this latter work in English. Enc refers to the Encyclopedia. When the letters E and G are used in the notes in regard to Hegel's works, the E with page numbers indicates the English Translation, while the G with page numbers indicates the original German edition, Hegel's *Werke*.]

of self-consciousness that no longer distinguishes between subject and object, and more specifically refuses to think of the relation between the divine and the human as fundamentally one of unbridgeable ontological distinction. The overcoming of the ontological difference in turn legitimates for Hegel the prospect of the transcendence of time and the reinterpretation of the symbol of immortality. Similar to Eckhart (e.g. DW II, Vb, 30; also XI, XIII, XXIX), immortality means less postmortem durational existence than the realization of unsurpassed union with the divine in the moment of thought in which the divine becomes subject as well as object. The following passage is exemplary:

The fact of the matter is that humanity is immortal only through cognitive knowledge, for only in the activity of thinking is its soul pure and free rather than mortal or animal-like. Cognition and thought are the root of human life, of human immortality as a totality within itself. (LPR3, G227–28, E314; see also LPR1 G105, E195)

Hegel can, and indeed often does, assert this gnoseological capacity without reference to those Christian symbols that provide the context for Eckhart's affirmation, for example, the symbols of image and sonship. Undoubtedly, in Hegel's overcoming of the durational view of immortality, Spinoza's view of *scientia intuitiva* provides a determinate influence. At the same time, the symbols of sonship and image are not without status throughout Hegel's work. They serve not only religiously to contextualize the possibility of a form of knowing that transcends knowledge's normal deployment (*Verstand*), but also religiously to make sense of such a prospect as belonging essentially to human being. The notions of divine image and sonship are both important themes in *Lectures of the Philosophy of Religion* 3; divine image comes into play in and through a reading of Genesis 3 in which putatively that which links human being most closely to the divine is compromised (1821 MS E 205–06, G 137–8; 1824 E184, G127), whereas divine sonship is tied to the necessary surpassing of the figure of Christ if human beings are to appropriate the meaning of the Incarnation, which is the unity of the divine and the human (1821 MS E 105, G43–44). In the case of the latter, John 16:7, in which Christ speaks of the necessity of going away and being substituted for by the Spirit, represents for Hegel the crucial biblical text.²⁶ By contrast, in the following passage from

²⁶ Michel Henry has pointed to Eckhart's and Hegel's selection of this passage to support a high anthropology. See *The Essence of Manifestation*, trans. Girard Etzkorn (The Hague: 1973), 428. For Eckhart, see especially 475. Of course, Eckhart's view of the

Lectures on the Philosophy of History,²⁷ which brings image and sonship together, the indeterminacy of the biblical site for sonship is matched by a change of biblical site for image from Genesis 3 to its classic locus, that is, Genesis 1:26:

It was through the Christian religion that the absolute idea of God, in its true conception, attained consciousness. Here man, too, found himself comprehended in his true nature, given the specific intuition of the Son. Man, finite when regarded from itself, is yet at the same time the image of God and fountain of infinity in himself. (333)

These essential convictions, and the fact that infinity fully expresses itself in knowledge, link Hegel closely to Eckhart and help to justify Hegel's own insight about a close connection. Hegel does not directly argue his case. Instead, the reader of Hegel finds a general defense of the mystical as involving this unsurpassable level of cognitive competence, and a rethinking of *mystery* as what is open to thought rather than being constitutively closed to it as a secret (*Geheimnis*) (LPR1 1821 G7, E88). It is the section on revealed religion in the *Phenomenology* (no. 722) that provides the *locus classicus* of the redefinition of the mystical: "For the mystical (*das Mystische*) is not the concealment of a secret, or ignorance, but consists in the self knowing itself to be one with the divine being..." (E437) (also LPR1 1821 MS E 87, G6–7).

While it is true that Hegel's view of the nature of philosophical discourse as self-justifying prohibits his making an appeal to any precedent as authoritative, he feels more than entitled to imply an invidious contrast between the speculative boldness of a medieval mystic and modern thought which either never gets off the ground (rationalism) or does so vacuously, since it involves a *salto mortale*. Hegel, who never tires of criticizing a fideist such as Jacobi,²⁸ also has no compunction about criticizing

Gottesgeburt represents an even more radical version of our essential equality with Christ. Pace Schoeller in *Gottesgeburt and Selbstbewusstsein* Hegel does not take this direct route, although this is not to say that Hegel's reflection on either image or sonship can strictly speaking be divorced from his Trinitarian reflection. For good accounts of the two different strands of image and sonship in Eckhart, see *The Essence of Manifestation*, 428–32, and Frank Tobin, *Meister Eckhart: Thought and Language* (Philadelphia: 1986), 102–04.

²⁷ Citations are from the English translation by J. Sibree (New York: 1956).

²⁸ Jacobi has to be considered the prime object of attack in Hegel's attack against what he refers to "intuitionism" at the beginning of the *Lesser Logic* no. 61–78. In this text, which dates from the 1820s, the "faith" that is expressed in the particular mode of intuitionism under consideration has just those kind of empirical properties that identify Jacobi, who availed of English empiricism, to make his case for the immediacy and commonsense of faith. Over 20 years before, Jacobi's commitment to immediacy was also an object of attack.

Schleiermacher. This he does after, as well as before, the appearance of Schleiermacher's classic, *The Christian Faith* (1821).²⁹ Unlike the speculative mystical tradition, both Jacobi and Schleiermacher misconstrue the nature of Christianity, which decidedly does not pay homage to the "Unknown God."³⁰ For the purposes of contrast, one could say Hegel puts the apophatic side of Eckhart—the side that would affirm the secret—in brackets. But this risks confounding Hegel with Baader who, follower of Boehme that he is, puts the stress on the self-revealing aspect of God. Hegel in fact goes much further; he proscribes any sense of mystery altogether, and denies the possibility as well as the fact of divine reality exceeding knowledge in its highest register, that is, in his post-Kantian environment, the register of *Vernunft*. Although Baader is just as interested as Hegel in using Eckhart to critique post-Kantian fideism, and is prepared to tone down Eckhart's apophatic register, he never fails to acknowledge that the divine constitutively remains a secret, and as such is unmasterable by thought. Not so Hegel. In constructive works such as the *Encyclopedia*, as well as in interpretive texts such as *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel not only puts in brackets apophatic language, but tends to interpret apophatic language as merely preliminary with respect to the kataphatic language of divine disclosure, which he identifies as the true mystical. These texts represent more than the mere expression of personal preference. They suggest in fact the essentially privative nature of negative terms and their being ordered towards the positive. The best illustration of this—because it shows rather than states—is to be found in Hegel's discussion of Neoplatonism and other mystical varieties of thought such as Gnosticism and the Kabbalah in *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* and *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Hegel opines in both cases that

See *Faith and Knowledge*, trans. Walter Cerf and H.S. Harris (Albany, N.Y.: 1977), 97–153. Hegel has nothing but disgust for the *salto mortale* prescribed by Jacobi, which he takes to be positivistic and reactionary, and thus far from mystical in his own refined sense.

²⁹ Hegel launches an attack against Schleiermacher's particular brand of intuitionism as early as *Faith and Knowledge* (150–52). The specific object of attack is the romantic brand of Spinozism of Schleiermacher's famous *Reden* (1799). The second foray occurs after the publication of *Die Glaubenslehre* in 1821. In the 1824 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Schleiermacher's archeological starting point is submitted to a trenchant critique. But this is preceded by an even more vehement critique in Hegel's Foreword to *Die Religion in innern Verhältnisse zur Wissenschaft* by W.F. Hinrichs. For a critical edition of Hinrichs's text, a new translation of Hegel's Foreword, and a comprehensive study of the issues between Hegel and Schleiermacher, see Eric van der Luft, *Hegel, Hinrichs, and Schleiermacher on Feeling and Reason in Religion: The Texts of the 1821–22 Debate* (Lewis-town: 1987).

³⁰ See LPR1 1824 E 266, G173; also LPR1 1821 MS E88, 7; E107, G 26; Enc no. 73.

the mysterious origin or the origin as mystery is a function of grammar, specifically of the need to have in place a grammatical subject of attribution, which is not necessarily the real subject. The apophatically coded divine origin is not the actual (*wirklich*) divine, but the potential for divinity that gets hypostatized (LPR3 1821 MS E 86, G23–4). Although Hegel does not explicitly make the point with respect to Eckhart, what applies to these esoteric traditions logically applies to all Christian Neoplatonists, and even more so to Eckhart who is the most radical of all Christian Neoplatonists. A decade after the death of Hegel, Hans Martensen, a major Danish sympathizer with Hegel, feels perfectly comfortable in applying Hegel's general point about the hypostatization of mystery to Eckhart and the Christian Neoplatonic tradition of discourse which he perfects and disseminates.

In the work of the historical Eckhart, the insistence on the codependence of God and creation bears a complex relation to his reflections on the Godhead (*Gottheit*). Of course, it is possible to read the codependence as taking issue with Aquinas's famous declaration in the *Summa* 1. Q13 art. 7, that, while the world has a real relation to God, God does not have a real relation to the world. But in the context of Eckhart's work as a whole, the correlativity of God and creation can be understood negatively,³¹ since it is precisely this correlativity that gives human beings purchase on the divine, indeed, allows them to construct God as an idol. In the history of effects of the Eckhartian tradition it is Angelus Silesius who highlights this aspect of Eckhart's thought,³² which, arguably, is given more purchase when situated in a more revelation-friendly form of mystical theology such as that of Jacob Boehme. Although Silesius is neither a proven source for German idealism's general embracing of the codetermination of God and world, nor of Hegel's particular version, nevertheless, the idea of reciprocal dependence becomes metaphysically central. No longer, as

³¹ This is not to say that the reciprocity has to be read negatively. One can make the case that when Eckhart underscores reciprocity in a positive fashion the accent falls on the givenness of the unencompassable divine to human knowledge and experience. That is, Eckhart is not directly contradicting Aquinas, but changing the horizon in which the language of reciprocity is appropriate.

³² This is a genuine theme in Eckhart given his emphasis on the importance of the mystical event. See especially *DW* LXXIII; also XIV, LIX. The reciprocity of Creator and creature is a major theme in the poetic mysticism of Angelus Silesius, who writes at the end of the 17th century. The emphasis falls on the mutuality of divine disclosure and access to the divine in the mystical experience as such. Many of Silesius's most powerful assertions of this point are to be found in *The Cherubic Wanderer*, trans. Maria Shradly (New York: 1986), 43, 53.

in medieval German mystical thought, is the connection registered by and rendered in knowing either controlled or curtailed by apophatic modes of thought. Indeed, from the inception of German idealism in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, the notion of reciprocity becomes regulative. In fact, it would be no exaggeration to say that the idea of reciprocal dependence and correlativity functions basically to relativize, even undermine, the apophatic. It does so essentially by understanding reciprocal dependence as a symbol of revelation or, better, as a symbol of the divine as a self-revealing and self-manifesting process. Hegel not only reverses the order of preference between mystery and revelation found in Eckhart, but makes mystery depend totally on revelation. The language of the immanifest divine is parasitic on the positive language concerning divine enactment which it relegates to a secondary status and at a limit deconstructs. As Hegel makes clear in his works on logic, this applies to the extreme apophatic term, *Nichts*, just as it applies to the less radical apophatic terms. In both of his logical works, the later *Logic* of the *Encyclopedia*, as well as the early *Greater Logic* (1812), Hegel argues that Being rather than Nothing is the first category of thought, although he agrees that the very indeterminacy of Being effectively makes it indistinguishable from Nothing in thought. Needless to say, the Hegelian preference does not completely separate him from Eckhart who, if he risked positing *Nichts* as origin, just as often posited Being. This was the case not simply in Eckhart's Latin works, but also in his German vernacular sermons, where Being or *istigkeit* essentially disqualifies materiality, corporeality, and temporality, and consigns them to non-being. Although Hegel's developmental ontology forbids him from being comfortable either with Being or Nothing as ultimate categories, his preference for Being is, nonetheless, telling. The relation between Hegel's logical works and Eckhart's *Parisian Questions* is especially compelling. Hegel makes two major preliminary moves: first, logic is metaphysics, because it cannot do without the category of Being, and second, metaphysics cannot do without the view of God as the highest Being. It is in the second move that the link between Hegel and Eckhart is transparent, for the connection reverses the standard direction of thinking from God to Being and asserting God to be a mode of being, albeit a modeless mode of being.³³ If the former is exemplified in such classical thinkers

³³ Schoeller in *Gottesgeburt und Selbstbewusstsein* (18ff.) draws attention to the connection between Eckhart and Hegel secured by Hegel's definition of the nature of his logic, which obviously differs considerably in ontological and theological intention from that of Aristotle. This melding of logic, metaphysics, and theology was a problem from the

as Augustine and Aquinas, Eckhart effects a revolution when he thinks of Being in terms of God. Although he does this throughout his work in various ways, even in his German sermons, he does it most explicitly and formally when he advances the formula *Esse est Deus*. Although Hegel has no knowledge of this text, Beierwaltes is undoubtedly right to insist on the structural importance of this inverted equation, and especially on the extent to which it is assimilable by German idealism in a way that Aquinas's more theistic, and more analogically framed, proposition of *Deus est Esse* is not.³⁴

Beierwaltes's archeological work also raises the question of whether Hegel's enthusiastic attitude towards Eckhart might not be a function of his generally positive attitude towards Neoplatonic philosophy, and especially the thought of Plotinus and Proclus which, as *Lectures in the History of Philosophy* shows,³⁵ Hegel knows well. Although Hegel himself does not draw a historical line of connection, classical Neoplatonism—and by implication any Christian facsimile—evinces a similar commitment to a more than instrumental form of knowing that elevates human being into participation in a divine order of reality. While in the case of both Neoplatonic thinkers Hegel shows some reserve with respect to their identification of the first principle as a unity beyond multiplicity and self-knowledge or self-reflection,³⁶ and about the apophatic vocabulary that accompanies the identification,³⁷ at the same time Hegel believes that Neoplatonism

beginning for those who followed Aristotle. Trendelenberg offered a critique of Hegel circa 1840, which is now best known through Kierkegaard's appropriation in *Philosophical Fragments* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*.

³⁴ See Beierwaltes, *Platonismus und Idealismus*, 37–67.

³⁵ LHP2, 374–453 (general). For Plotinus and Proclus, see LHP2, 404–30 and 432–50.

³⁶ Hegel has relatively detailed accounts of the unitive aspects of both Plotinus and Proclus. With respect to Plotinus he acknowledges that the first principle is strictly speaking unitive and without even implicit multiplicity (LHP2, 411), that it is both beyond Being (412) and Being, but Being as divine (415). Hegel is identifying Plotinus's position and his own as ontotheological in Heidegger's sense. He tends to focus in particular on *Enneads* 3.1 and 6.1. Hegel introduces a critical note when he observes that Plotinus asserts but cannot account for the movement from the One to the Nous, from unity to multiplicity, and from non-reflection to reflection (416–17). He makes similar points with respect to Proclus, whose commitment to a philosophical system greatly exceeds that of Plotinus (436). A unity beyond multiplicity is posited, although there is a suggestion of development in and of unity lacking in the case of Plotinus (435). Hegel also believes that the second area of Proclus's system, the area which is articulated by the Triad (448) is more profitable from a modern point of view that attempts to reconcile Christianity and philosophy. It is also the case that Proclus cannot explain the movement towards differentiation and multiplicity (436).

³⁷ See LHP2, 414 (Plotinus); 435 (Proclus) where the divine unity is said explicitly to be unknowable. In the case of Proclus, however, Hegel wants to balance the apophaticism by

provides nothing less than a blueprint for idealist thought.³⁸ It does so in its confidence in epistemic access to reality, in its noetic characterization of this reality, in its implicit complication of divine unity to involve differentiation and a measure of plurality, and finally in the dynamic coding of reality which implicitly shifts the center of gravity to the “really real” as end rather than origin. While Hegel’s own texts hardly provide sufficient information for the reader to make a judgement as to how he sees the historical relation between classical Neoplatonism and Eckhart, internal evidence strongly suggests that the recommended modification of classical Neoplatonism would apply also to the Latin and German works of Eckhart.³⁹

J.G. FICHTE (1762–1814)

Serious impediments exist with regard to including Fichte in a narrative of the recovery of Eckhart as a philosophical and religious resource in the first half of the 19th century. First, there is no direct evidence that Fichte appealed to or actually read the work of the medieval German mystics.⁴⁰ Second, of the German idealists, Fichte showed the greatest hostility towards Christian revelation and the institutional church,⁴¹ and was the

suggesting that the Triad, which configures a more differentiated form of unity, is knowable (448). It might be noted that in his discussion of Plotinus, Hegel makes a great deal about “ecstasy” in Plotinus (409–12). Although he acknowledges its genuine Platonic pedigree, he thinks that the accent on the irrational is too high.

³⁸ When speaking of Plotinus in LHP2 Hegel says that he falls short of “high Idealism,” which presumably is realized in German idealism (412). Proclus comes even closer to full realization, specifically, to being a genuinely “speculative” thinker (434), which is the highest compliment Hegel pays any thinker.

³⁹ The requirement of a measure of emendation with respect to Eckhart, even as, or especially as, rendered in and by the German works is downplayed by Schoeller. See *Gottesgeburt und Selbstbewusstsein*, 78–79, where Hegel’s highly differentiated and developmental unity is considered to be essentially the same as the archeological unity of Eckhart.

⁴⁰ In a recent text the great scholar of German idealism, Emilio Brito, considers himself to be summing up the consensus view when he makes this point. See his *J.G. Fichte et la transformation du Christianisme* (Leuven: 2004), 691.

⁴¹ Fichte’s *Versuch einer Kritik alles Offenbarung* (1792) represents the most vituperative of all of Fichte’s text. It is considerably more critical of the revelation and its attendant concepts than Kant’s *Religion* (1792), although originally the work was identified as being by Kant. Its emphasis on autonomy, on the moral criterion for valid religion, and its insistence that the grounds of belief have themselves to be justified certainly set the terms for the early trajectory of German idealism. For a convenient English translation of this text, see *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation*, trans. Garrett Green (Cambridge: 1978).

most scathing about the Christian doctrine of creation.⁴² And third, if the various editions of the *Wissenschaftslehre* (1794, 1798, 1804, 1812) are to count as normative for our understanding of Fichte, then the exaggerated epistemological thrust of this kind of work, as well as its decided finitism and activism,⁴³ seems to tell against the very possibility of mysticism. Certainly, the infinite striving that seems to be enjoined by the *Wissenschaftslehre* appears to be at the antipode from the kind of “detachment” enjoined by medieval mysticism in general, and by Eckhart in particular, who fatefully introduces into German thought the notions of *Gelassenheit* and *Abgeschiedenheit*.

Still, these difficulties have not deterred a number of scholars from judging that there is a remarkably close relationship between Fichte and Eckhart, one that cuts as deep, if not deeper, than the relation between Eckhart and Hegel. Hans Martensen (1840) was, arguably, the first thinker of substance who drew attention to the connection, and was followed a few years later by Pfeiffer (1845), one of Eckhart’s first editors (1857). Importantly, Martensen was quite specific in his textual location of the linkage. Indeed, he establishes an interpretive pattern that persists to this day by pointing to *Anweisung zum seligen Leben* (1806).⁴⁴ In the 20th century there has been periodic reference to the connection between these two thinkers, often but not always with reference to *Anweisung*. The Protestant theologian, F. Gogarten,⁴⁵ who influenced both Bultmann and Barth, argues for the mystical, and specifically Eckhartian, determination of Fichte’s thought at the beginning of the 20th century (1914). Much

⁴² As is well known, the work of Fichte was beset by the “Atheism” controversy in the period between 1798–1800 which, as in the case of the earlier controversy about the thought of Lessing initiated by Jacobi, centered around the question as to whether his philosophical system promoted pantheism or theism.

⁴³ Since its very first appearance there was a debate as to whether the *Wissenschaftslehre* gave priority to the identity proposition with which it commences or the final proposition which demands an identity that ought to be (*Sollen*) actualized, but in fact is not. Hegel and Schelling read Fichte to favor the latter rather than the former. While interpreters who favor the former have not been lacking, the latter has had more support. The best defense of this interpretation is to be found in A. Philonenko, *La liberté humaine dans la philosophie de Fichte* (Paris: 1966).

⁴⁴ See *Die Anweisung zum seligen Leben oder auch die Religionslehre*, ed. Fritz Medicus (Hamburg: 1994). This recent text represents a reproduction with an introductory essay of the 1910 edition.

⁴⁵ In his *Fichte als religiöser Denker* (Jena: 1914), F. Gogarten announces that the fundamental benefit of Fichte’s thought is that it taps into the stream of mystical thought (63–64). This thought, however, is more nearly represented by *Anweisung* than by the *Wissenschaftslehre* (59–61). Gogarten insists that this kind of mysticism is different in kind than that of Pietism and its prolongation in Schleiermacher.

later Ernst Benz adds his considerable authority to the connection.⁴⁶ The definitive texts on the general topic of the relation of Eckhart and Fichte, however, are produced by the German scholars, Heinz Finke and Ernst von Bracken,⁴⁷ around the time of the Second World War. Quite recently, Emilio Brito,⁴⁸ the eminent historian of German idealism, has turned his attention to this topic.

Not all of these writers directly address the difficulties of drawing the connection between the medieval mystic and the German idealist. Indeed, not infrequently they restrict themselves simply to bringing out the compatibility of the basic vision, especially with respect to how the notion of divinity has had impact on its philosophical-theological anthropology and vice versa. At the same time, none of the above difficulties are completely ignored. Just about all who investigate the issue of relation acknowledge that Fichte was not acquainted with the texts of Meister Eckhart,⁴⁹ or more generally with the texts of medieval mysticism. But this confession has to be distinguished from the stronger thesis that Fichte had absolutely no knowledge of the mystical traditions. Some scholars suggest that Fichte likely read Gottfried Arnold's very influential late 17th-century text on the marginal and heretical traditions,⁵⁰ which included sections on Meister Eckhart as well as Joachim de Fiore and Boehme. Moreover, in his popular works, Fichte shows an openness to the idea of the mystical, even if he is not uncritical.⁵¹ In addition, it is recognized by commentators that

⁴⁶ See Benz, *Les sources*, 27, 30, also 7, 11.

⁴⁷ Heinz Finke, *Meister Eckhart und J. G. Fichte verglichen in ihren religiösen Vorstellung.* (Dissertation, Greifswald: 1934); Ernst von Bracken, *Meister Eckhart und Fichte* (Würzburg: 1943).

⁴⁸ See Brito, *J. G. Fichte et la transformation du Christianisme*, 691–712. This reflection on the specific relation between Fichte and Eckhart is framed more broadly by a reflection on Fichte and mysticism (691–743). See also Katharina Ceming, *Mystik und Ethik bei Meister Eckhart und Johann Gottlieb Fichte* (Frankfurt: 1999). Ceming insists on the importance of *Die Anweisung* for the purposes of comparison (39–40), but does not offer an extended reflection on this text.

⁴⁹ Arguably, it was the research of H.G. Haack in the early 20th century that set the interpretive benchmark. See *J. G. Fichtes Theologie: Das Christentum in der Philosophie des späteren Fichte* (Borna-Leipzig: 1914). Finke, Von Bracken, Brito, and Ceming follow suit.

⁵⁰ See *J. G. Fichtes Theologie*, 13. This position is supported by Brito. See *J. G. Fichte*, 691. The text they have in mind is *Unparteiische Kirchen- und Ketzerhistorie: vom Anfang des Neuen Testaments bis auf das Jahre 1688*, 2 vols. See the modern reprint (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1967).

⁵¹ As Ceming points out, Fichte is critical of the dualistic tendency in mysticism that specifies itself in an exaggerated opposition of the self and the divine, the favoring of a contemplative and uninvolved relation to reality, and a posture of exclusivity and specialness, which significantly detracts from exemplarity. See *Mystik und Ethik*, 40–45. Ceming is able to sustain the connection between Fichte and Eckhart by offering a reading of Eckhart

while it is appropriate to acknowledge the vast difference in context and degree of assimilation of Christian belief and general culture, it does not follow that Fichte's disenchantment with a positivistic view of revelation and dissatisfaction with the doctrinaire and institutional church separates him definitively from Eckhart. Granted that Eckhart and, a fortiori, his followers are more respectful to the givens of tradition and avoid the belligerent rhetoric that characterizes Fichte's early work, still Eckhart is critical of the view of the institutional church as the sacrament of salvation, distances himself from the church's view of the efficacy of its rituals and the absoluteness of its ordering of the virtues, and he is more than a little concerned that the prevailing theological and philosophical views of God move towards the condition of idolatry. And finally, although most of the supporters of this most unlikely of connections are willing to concede that, if Fichte is to be defined by the various editions of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, there is not much room for mysticism of any kind, they see no good reason why Fichte should in fact be defined by this text, first published in 1794. While some make the argument that the "mystical" is an appropriate category to interpret only the texts of the "later" Fichte (post-1804), others suggest that the basic affinity with more ancient forms of thinking is in evidence early on, perhaps as early as *Die Bestimmung des Menschens* (1800).⁵² Almost all are prepared to assert that the openness to premodern modes of thought finds its definitive expression in *Anweisung* (1806).⁵³ Certainly the activism and finitism of *Wissenschaftslehre* is at least significantly modified in these later texts, which exhibit a considerably more contemplative stance. Moreover, Fichte's consistent epistemological register is not thought to present an insuperable difficulty with respect to seeing Eckhart and Fichte together. On the one hand, the mystical register of

which sees Eckhart going beyond this model of mysticism and instead offering a form that deconstructs the contemplation—action difference, underscores the self's participation in the divine, and validates the universality of the participative form of life that constitutes the kingdom of God as here and now.

⁵² For a convenient English translation of *Die Bestimmung*, see *The Vocation of Man*, trans. R. Chisholm (New York: 1956). In that text, there is a palpable metaphysical turn, which represents a serious influx of Platonism. The distinction between appearance and reality is to a significant extent ontologized, and Fichte departs from Kant's unrealized eschatology and that of his earlier *Wissenschaftslehre* by suggesting that to a significant extent the kingdom—essentially a moral kingdom—is realized in the here and now.

⁵³ Although Martensen makes the point as early as 1840, to be followed by Gogarten in 1914, in more academic scholarship it is Von Bracken (1943) who has set the terms of the contemporary discussion. Brito's analysis of the Eckhart–Fichte relation largely operates within these terms.

Eckhart is itself quite epistemological, as suggested in his view of the event of intuitive knowing of the divine and its possibility. On the other hand, the epistemological register of Fichte is not without metaphysical implications that suggest the forms of Neoplatonism that Eckhart adopted.⁵⁴ In fact, one can go even further. There is an extraordinary homology between Eckhart's synthesis of Neoplatonism and John's Gospel and what is effected by Fichte in *Anweisung*, especially in lectures six and ten of this self-consciously edifying discourse.

All of these points could do with some unpacking. I begin with the last mentioned, that is, that the synthesis between an essentially Neoplatonic metaphysics (and its correlative epistemology) and the biblical text is further specified as the link between Neoplatonic metaphysics and the fourth Gospel. That John's Gospel is crucial to Eckhart's enterprise requires little demonstration.⁵⁵ Of course, its centrality lies not so much in the fact that Eckhart provides an interpretation of the Prologue—although this is far from trivial—but rather how contact with the transcendent intra-Trinitarian Word is pivotal in the description and explanation of mystical experience. Of course, mystical experience reciprocally functions as a means to explain the movement of the Word from the sphere of transcendence to the sphere of immanence. In *Anweisung* Fichte self-consciously characterizes his text as such a synthesis, but also deflates expectations of uniqueness by suggesting that this synthesis is a requirement for any form of thought that intends to legitimate itself as a *philosophia perennis*. Still, the synthesis effected by Fichte is far from generic. Fichte is at his

⁵⁴ This need not imply that Neoplatonic metaphysical commitment in Fichte is at the same level as that found in Eckhart. For this point, see Brito, *J. G. Fichte*, 696, 700, 711. Hervé Pasqua has a number of interesting reflections on the relation between Eckhart's view of unity and that of Proclus and Plotinus. See *Maître Eckhart: le procès du l'Un* (Paris: 2006), 35, 52, 61–63, 78, 97, 161. In general Pasqua believes that Eckhart's thought requisitely domesticates classical Neoplatonism—as is the case in Pseudo-Dionysius—but that at the same time Neoplatonic henology exercises a determinate influence such that the Trinity is sometimes delegated to the penultimate sphere of reality, which in Plotinus's scheme would be *Nous* rather than the One.

⁵⁵ Eckhart wrote an important commentary on the Prologue to the Gospel of John, which by consensus is one of his more important works. Bernard McGinn has translated a significant extract. See *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense* (New York: 1981), 122–73. It should be pointed out also that because of the centrality of “beginning” in Genesis, much of Eckhart's commentary on that text is ordered towards the interpretation of Logos in the Gospel of John. See *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons*, 62–121. With respect to the German texts, it is interesting that the Gospel of John is cited more than any other biblical text and the textual focus falls heavily on John 1 together with John 14–17.

most Eckhartian when he treats the transcendent Word. In *Anweisung* this involves, on the one hand, a focus on the absolute as opposed to derivative domains of reality and, on the other hand, a hermeneutic of the Prologue to John's Gospel. With regard to the former, although Fichte does avail of the concept of Life (*Leben*) to insist on the dynamism and vitalism of the absolute dimension of Being, like Eckhart, and his Neoplatonic predecessors,⁵⁶ he wishes to underscore divine unity as the origin and end of phenomenal reality.

In pointing to "being" rather than "nothing" as the highest category, Fichte resembles more closely the Eckhart of the Latin than the German sermons.⁵⁷ At the same time, it is clear that Fichte is as guilty of an egregious violation of the prohibition against ontotheology as Hegel. For in the methodological conjugation of metaphysics and John's Gospel, as well as in and through the philosophical hermeneutic of John's Gospel, Being itself is identified with a divine, which,⁵⁸ if continuous with certain aspects of the Christian tradition (i.e. mystical), is at odds with others. In a certain sense, then, it can be said that, as with Hegel, Fichte assumes something like the *Esse est Deus* formula of the *Parisian Questions* that

⁵⁶ In connecting *Sein* to *Leben* and *Gedanke* in that text, Fichte repeats the Neoplatonic triad of Being-Life-Intelligence that is basic to the thought of both Plotinus and Proclus. It should be pointed out, however, that as a reader of John's Gospel, Fichte feels called on to include *Liebe* as a central concept. Love, Life, and Thought are both coextensive with Being and interpret it. One could think of Love as the Christian agent or reagent that makes *Anweisung* a species of Christian Neoplatonism. The commitment to the category of Love does not distinguish Eckhart from Fichte. While Eckhart's use of John often does not issue in highlighting the category of love, this is not always the case. See DW X, which represents an interpretation of 1 John 4:6 *Deus est Caritas*. Although, unlike Bonaventure, Being rather than Love is the prime category, Eckhart often does not so much exclude Love as fold it into Being.

⁵⁷ No absolute contrast is implied here. Eckhart does, indeed, use the language of "being" as the highest category in the German sermons also, as witness his manifold reflections on *Istigkeit*. But it is not unusual in the German sermons for him to use the extreme apophatic language of "nothing."

⁵⁸ As a category of contemporary analysis, "ontotheology" has two different uses in contemporary thought. The first, provided by Karl Löwith, thinks of a species of thought being ontotheological when there is essentially a mixing of disciplines, and theological presuppositions are allowed to play a role in philosophy. The second is provided by Martin Heidegger. Here the emphasis falls not on the mixing of disciplines—of which Heidegger would not approve—but on philosophy's betrayal of the mystery of being as being (*on he on*) and its hypostatization of Being into a ground. The error is coincident with metaphysics itself and can be found in Plato and in Aristotle. It is better called *ontotheology*. For Löwith, see "Hegel and the Christian Religion," in *Nature, History and Existentialism*, ed. A. Levison (Evanston, Ill.: 1966), 163; for Heidegger, see "The Ontotheological Nature of Metaphysics," in *Essays in Metaphysics: Identity and Difference*, trans. Kurt Leidecker (New York: 1960), 33–67.

inverts Aquinas's analogical formula of *Deus est Esse*. It is important to point out, however, that for Fichte *Sein* is only an abstract origin, and that it is better to think of the origin as being differentiated into *Sein* and *Da-sein*, Being and Existence. Although the language is redolent of Aquinas, it is much more evocative of the historical Eckhart to the degree to which it suggests an ecstasis of Being.⁵⁹ Although this pair is primary, Fichte feels inclined to underscore the noetic dimension of this absolute dimension by speaking of *Gedanke*. Importantly, *Gedanke* does not connote anything like a subject-object split characteristic, for example, of Plotinus's *Nous* (Anw.' 56, 60–62). There is, then, as in Eckhart, and indeed as in Plotinus understood in a certain way, the coextensivity of Being and Thought (*Enneads* 6.7.4; 3.9.9).⁶⁰ Crucially, when Fichte does add to this trio other noetic terms such as *Bewusstsein* and *Reflexion*, for example, in Lecture 4, he does so with a view to account for a mode of knowledge that in the strict sense is intentional and for the multiplicity of appearances that are correlative to intentional acts of knowledge. Fichte is clear that with “consciousness” and “reflection” one has moved from the absolute to the relative sphere of reality. Just in case there is any doubt, at one particular point in *Anweisung* Fichte repeats Eckhart's radically Neoplatonic stance of designating the appearances as nothing (*Nichtsein*) (14).⁶¹ Crucially, no more than in the case of Eckhart is Fichte subscribing to a view of radical contingency; rather, he wishes to assign meontological status to the order of creation by dint of a contrast with Being and Existence, which correlate quite generally with Father and Son.⁶²

Along the purely philosophical axis, it is clear that Fichte is Eckhartian in that he refuses to distinguish between two related but distinct Neoplatonic models; that of Plotinus, which suggests a unitary divine completely

⁵⁹ Eckhart himself is not uncomfortable using the language of essence and existence, but in a way that is different from Aquinas. For clarification of quite different uses, see especially Ruedi Imbach, *Deus est Intelligere: Das Verhältnis von Sein und Denken in seiner Bedeutung für das Gottesverständnis bei Thomas von Aquin und in den Pariser Quaestionen Meister Eckharts* (Fribourg: 1976); see also Alain de Libera, *Le problème de l'être chez Maître Eckhart: logique et métaphysique de l'analogie*, (Cahiers de la revue de théologie et de philosophie) 4 (Geneva: 1980).

⁶⁰ For an exemplary discussion of the relation of the One and knowledge, see John Rist *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: 1967), 38–54. Rist points out that Plotinus seems to oscillate between denying knowledge to the One and affirming that the One has a superior form of knowledge (*hypernoesis*) or other form of knowledge (*katanoesis*) that does not involve the subject-object division.

⁶¹ For Eckhart's characterization of the order of creation as “nothing,” see DW XXI, XXIX, LIX. This view was condemned in the papal bull of 1329.

⁶² It is possible, but by no means certain, that *Gedanke* correlates with Spirit.

beyond duality, and that of Proclus who, while also validating a unitary divine, thinks of unity as sufficiently complex to include some form of differentiation.⁶³ At the same time, Fichte represents a simplification of Eckhart and the Neoplatonic traditions that he synthesizes. Fichte dispenses altogether with the radical apophatic language characteristic of Eckhart and Dionysian mystical theology in general. Specifically, Fichte has no use for the prefix “über” and never suggests that absolute reality requires a move beyond essence or Being. Fichte scrupulously avoids identifying absolute reality with “nothing” (*Nichts*); that term is exclusively reserved for the ontologically subsequent form of being that is appearance. Procedurally at least, Fichte is close to Hegel, who embraces mysticism but only on pains of removing all language that would suggest the existence of a domain of reality that is ineluctably secret or hidden.⁶⁴

The Eckhartian character of *Anweisung* becomes even more evident when we attend to the hermeneutic element of the text which complements its largely Neoplatonic metaphysics. As already indicated, in line with Eckhart—although not necessarily because of him—Fichte gives a decided preference to John 1:1. Without exaggeration it can be said that the mutual correlation of the philosophical discourse of *Being* and *Dasein* with the unorginate generator and the Word generated of John 1:1 regulates the interpretation of other crucial passages in the fourth Gospel, for example, John 1:3, John 1:14, and John 5:19. When, for example, Fichte interprets John 5:19, in which Jesus speaks to the Son doing nothing without the aid of the Father, he moves the relationship immediately to the level of the transcendent divine and speaks to the kind of relation as one of intimacy in which the independence of the Son is “swallowed up” (*Aufgegung*) in the Father (Anw. 95). Here the strong henological pull that one observes in Eckhart’s German sermons seems to be in evidence. John 1:14 does not function prominently in Fichte’s text. At one level this is not surprising, given Fichte’s well-documented hostility in his early writings to the positive claims of Christian faith. Still, *Anweisung* represents just

⁶³ For a wonderful account of this distinction see Todd Ohara, “The Internal ‘Logic’ of Plotinian and Dionysian Apophasis,” dissertation (Yale: 2007). It is an established fact that Eckhart had access to more of Proclean conceptuality than could be gleaned from *Liber de Causis*. With respect to Proclus’s view on unity, Beierwaltes has suggested that Eckhart had access to Proclus’s commentary on Plato’s *Parmenides* through intermediate writers. See *Proklos: Grundzüge seiner Metaphysik* (Frankfurt: 1965), 395–98. McGinn gives his seal of approval to Beierwaltes in *The Essential Eckhart*, 303, note 60.

⁶⁴ Although, as a matter of fact, finite beings may fail to access what in principle is available to them.

that kind of major step back from Fichte's hitherto aggressive posture towards Christianity, which makes a favoring of the symbol of Incarnation a possibility. To a significant extent what Fichte says concerning John 5:19 can stand proxy for his relative silence on John 1:14.⁶⁵ Fichte is no less convinced than Eckhart that it is the meaning of Incarnation rather than the historical fact that is capable of being philosophically justified. Furthermore, Fichte operates comfortably within Eckhartian brackets when he insists that humanity is true humanity only as divinized; and it is only divinized to the extent to which it partakes of the intimacy of the relation of the Son and Father or, in Fichte's vocabulary, between Being and Existence.

However, the reading of John that seems most redolent of the connection between Fichte and Eckhart revolves around the reading of John 1:3. In his interpretation of "all things were made by him and without him not anything was made that was made," Fichte makes essentially two points that seem to have irrefutable Eckhartian pedigree: (1) appearances have no more than the status of illusions or *Schein*; and (2) instead of an explanation of why then there is a world of appearances, given its ontological questionability, Fichte offers instead simply the observation that the production of appearances is a reflex of a process of differentiation at the eternal level. Or put in other words, "creation" is itself a function of "generation." Again, while a genetic argument cannot be supplied, it is impossible not to think of the following passage from Eckhart's interpretation in which not only is John 1:3 folded into John 1:1, but interpretation can rely on the intertextual relations between John and Genesis, Job and the Psalms, to make the point:

the beginning in which God created heaven and earth is the first simple now of eternity. I say that it is the very now in which God exists from eternity, in which also the emanations of the divine Persons eternally is, was and will be. Too he has been and is and will be... In the one and the same time in which he was God and in which he begot his co-eternal Son as God equal to himself, he also created the world... God speaks in the begetting of the Son; because the Son is the Word; he speaks in creating creatures... This

⁶⁵ Although not absolute silence. Jesus is discussed as the instantiation of what is possible for human beings in Lecture 5. There is a lack of interest in the uniqueness and historicity of Jesus. Brito remarks on how consistent Fichte is on the issue throughout his monumental text on Fichte. Obviously, there is a significant degree of overlap between Fichte's and Eckhart's Christology. The horizon of Eckhart's Christology is anthropological, its primary motivation securing the condition of the possibility of divinization. Moreover, at best Eckhart displays a lack of interest in the formula of Chalcedon; at worst he subverts it.

is why it says in another Psalm: "God has spoken once and for all and I have heard two things" (Ps. 61:12). The "two things" are heaven and earth, or rather "these two" are the emanations of persons and the creation of the world...⁶⁶

In his particular reading of John and in his synthesizing of this reading with Neoplatonic metaphysics, Fichte approximates much more closely to the Eckhart of the German sermons than does Hegel. The latter prioritizes John 1:14 and sees that John 1:3 develops John 1:1 and is not reducible to it, and in his recall of Neoplatonism puts more emphasis on the dynamic of manifestation and the ontological value of appearance than on the undisturbed unity. Both of these are in turn factors in Hegel's exploiting of Eckhart's notion of the reciprocity of Creator and creation, which decidedly is not where the emphasis falls in *Anweisung*, which not only exercises different priorities with respect to the fourth Gospel, but also has a view of Neoplatonism, which although embracing of its dynamism observes the ontological gap between the eternal and the temporal.

These different hermeneutic preferences with respect to the fourth Gospel further specify themselves in how 1 John 4:6, with its famous formula of God is Love, is deployed and used. In the case of Hegel in an early essay such as "The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate" (1799), the Preface to the *Phenomenology* (#19), and throughout *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel interprets Love through the generation and suffering of a genuine other that involves alienation potentially or even actually. By contrast, in the case of Fichte, Love has an entirely different denotation. Love is the milieu of inexpressible intimacy, whose differentiation is only such as to allow a kind of self-feeling or experience (*Empfindung*) that is prior to or other than alienation which supposes a contrast between the infinite and finite, the eternal and temporal. Quite clearly, with respect to the notion of Love in general, and more particularly as an interpreter of 1 John 4:6, Eckhart is decidedly closer to Fichte than he is to Hegel. If Hegel's view owes a debt to any mystical thinker in this regard, it is not to Eckhart, but rather to Boehme. The thinker who most clearly grasps the positive relation between Eckhart and Fichte on Love, and by the same token the distance between Hegel and Eckhart, is neither a historian of philosophy nor theology but a phenomenologist who engages in a genealogy of modes of subjectivity. In *The Essence of Manifestation* Michel Henry

⁶⁶ See *The Essential Eckhart*, 84–85.

brilliantly exposes the relative proximity of Fichte of *Anweisung* and the relative distance of Hegel from Eckhart on the meaning of Love.⁶⁷

HANS L. MARTENSEN (1808–84)

Hans L. Martensen is famous as the butt of Kierkegaard's jibes, and is paraded as a provincial disciple of Hegel prepared to surrender Christian particularity and the centrality of paradox to the Hegelian logic of mediation (*Vermittlung*).⁶⁸ The level of rhetoric is sufficiently high to raise the possibility that Martensen is, indeed, the victim of caricature. Indeed, it invites the consideration that with this Lutheran theologian–bishop one is dealing less with a pure Hegelian than with a sympathizer who wishes to cull Christianity of some of its more dogmatic features while still maintaining a strong doctrine of creation and even a view of creaturehood that makes worship real rather than notional. But Martensen is also a very important figure in the retrieval of mystical traditions in the 19th century. Exercises in such retrievals essentially bookend a productive writing career that spans 40 years. Martensen closes his writing career in 1881 with a book on the 17th-century Lutheran mystic, Jacob Boehme (1575–1624),⁶⁹ just as with only a little exaggeration he opens it with a monograph on Eckhart.⁷⁰ This text, published in Danish in 1840, and which now goes under the title of *Meister Eckhart: A Study in Speculative Theology*, offers a compilation of texts that historically contextualizes the work of Eckhart

⁶⁷ See Michel Henry, *The Essence of Manifestation*, trans. Girard Etzkorn (The Hague: 1973), 108, 112, 298–309; 333–34, and 428 among others.

⁶⁸ See, among other treatments of the relation between Kierkegaard and Martensen, the Introduction to *Between Hegel and Kierkegaard: Hans L. Martensen's Philosophy of Religion*, trans. Curtis L. Thompson and David J. Kangas (Atlanta, Ga.: 1997), 40–70; see also Nils Thulstrup, *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel*, trans. George L. Strengen (Princeton: 1980), 133–50. Thulstrup contends that a text such as *The Autonomy of Self-Consciousness in Modern Dogmatic Theology*, which makes a case for the necessity of a Hegelian methodology while adding caveats with respect to Christian requirements of a personal God, personal Christ, and personal self, is precisely the kind of position that most irritated Kierkegaard. Although Jon Steward takes issue with Thulstrup on a variety of matters, he supports his analysis on this point. See Steward, *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel Reconsidered* (Cambridge: 2003), 454–61; see also 272–81, 600–15.

⁶⁹ This text on Boehme, which was published in Danish, was quickly translated into English. See *Jacob Boehme: His Life and Teaching*, trans. Rhys Evans (London: 1885).

⁷⁰ A little exaggeration, since as Curtis Thompson points out, the Eckhart work is preceded by a number of theological publications and a number of smaller pieces on aesthetics. The most significant piece prior to the Eckhart work is *The Autonomy of Human Self-Consciousness in Modern Dogmatic Theology*, which was originally written in German in 1837 and translated into Danish in 1841.

and the tradition of mystical discourse that devolves from him, and critically evaluates it, while signaling that Eckhartian thought and German idealism are mutually illuminating, and in tandem play a productive role in the refurbishing of theology in the wake of Kant's critique. In important respects Martensen's overall agenda does not differ significantly from that of Baader, with whose thought Martensen is familiar. At the same time it should be said that Martensen's reading of Eckhart is by far the more focused, his method considerably more "scientific" (*wissenschaftlich*), and his ability to make distinctions between genres and levels of discourse much more developed.

In terms of contextualization, Martensen avers that Meister Eckhart is "the patriarch of German mysticism" (153). In its full range this tradition includes, in addition to Eckhart, Henry Suso, Johannes Tauler, and the *Theologia Germanica* (175, also 192–96). It does not include Ruysbroeck, who is regarded as constraining rather than developing the speculative impulse (156, 175, 196, 202–03).⁷¹ Martensen feels comfortable judging that German mysticism is the most developed form of Christian mysticism (152), and as such qualitatively superior to the other two major pre-Reformation types, on the one hand, the Neoplatonic kind of mysticism characteristic of the Eastern Christianity, whose exemplar is Pseudo-Dionysius (115) and, on the other, the more subjectively inclined mysticism of Western Christianity, which has its root in Augustine and finds classic medieval examples in Bernard of Clairvaux and Bonaventure. Martensen understands himself to be engaging in a reduction to pure types, and in fact sees clearly that Eckhart and his successors deploy much of the linguistic and conceptual machinery of the Dionysian tradition, even as the basic orientation is more in line with the Augustinian, or what Martensen refers to as the "occidental," tradition. According to Martensen, this tradition is more anthropological in orientation, and the German mystical tradition, which devolves from Eckhart, represents a radicalization of the anthropological tendency in that it becomes focused in disposition or *Gemyt* (192–94; also 152–53, 200–01, 240–41).

As with Baader, Martensen makes the point that this disposition is more cognitive than affective. While he makes no mention of Schleiermacher in his monograph on Eckhart, other texts of Martensen make it clear that he sides with Hegel over Schleiermacher in his view of the nature of Christian

⁷¹ This exclusion is extremely interesting and contrasts with the view of Baader, for whom Ruysbroeck provides a necessary curtailing of Meister Eckhart.

faith.⁷² Now, the anthropological constitution of German mysticism, and Eckhartian mysticism in particular, is marked by Martensen's selection of passages from Eckhart's sermons. Importantly, the selection is made from the German sermons. Long before Ernst Benz, Martensen wishes to underscore the vernacular and thus generative nature of Eckhart's mode of expression. If this mode of expression resembles high Neoplatonic mysticism in its use of apophatic language and paradox, its idiom is significantly less hieratic given its obvious intention to produce an event of recognition.⁷³ Again, however biblical at a depth level the Dionysian tradition is, Eckhart's sermons are simply much more obviously attentive to the biblical text.⁷⁴ Although the technical notions of the Godhead (*Gottheit*) and its unavailability to cognition, as well as the relation between Godhead and God, do not escape Martensen's attention (163, S60; 166, S27; 171, S69; 173, S55; 175–76, S52), the emphasis falls equally on the anthropological ground of the experience of God as well as the event of such experience. Accordingly, Martensen produces a number of passages bearing on both of these aspects. Similar to Baader, he attends to the former under the auspices of the nobility of the soul (163, S53, 169, S5b; 170, S25). Martensen deals with the latter by presenting a number of passages in which Eckhart deals with the divine birth or *Gottesgeburt* (163, S60; 164, S4; 168, S6; 169, S39, S25; 170, S39; 171–72, S2, S28, S48). If, in one sense, the event of divine birth does not admit of description, in another sense, in the encounter human intellect becomes adequate to the divine by becoming one with it (165, S73; 170, S9). To underscore this point, Martensen does not hesitate to reproduce the famous eye passage from the bull of 1329 to which Baader and Hegel recurred.

⁷² A year after his Eckhart volume Martensen published his influential *The Autonomy of Human Self-Consciousness in Modern Dogmatic Theology*. A translation from the Danish can be found in *Between Hegel and Kierkegaard*, 72–147. In it Martensen criticizes both the methodological viewpoint of Schleiermacher's theology of feeling which excludes the speculative as well as its consequences with respect both to the understanding of Christ and the self. The object of the critique is the *Glaubenslehre* (1821) (see 120–44). The critique is conducted from the point of view of Hegel and right-wing theological disciples such as Karl Rosenkranz. Interestingly, both Eckhart (85) and Baader (85, 88–89) are enlisted on the speculative side.

⁷³ For the emphasis not only on language in general, but on use of language in Eckhart, see Frank Tobin, *Meister Eckhart: Thought and Language* (Philadelphia: 1986). Chapter 3 concerns the former, Chapter 5 the latter.

⁷⁴ The expressly biblical dimension of Eckhart's thought represents an attractive feature of mystical thought that in Luther's view is absent from a figure such as Pseudo-Dionysius, against whom he constantly inveighs.

For Martensen, Eckhart, and the broader tradition that expresses and to some extent normalizes his thought, is of contemporary significance. Eckhart's thought is already in significant respects "speculative" in that it brings together Christianity and philosophical thought, and allows the former to be elucidated—if not necessarily explained—by the latter. In this respect Eckhart's synthesis anticipates post-Kantian German thought, which is speculative all the way through in that philosophy is not simply a discourse of elucidation but a discourse of explanation. Moreover, the continuity between German idealist thought and the speculation of the medieval thinker is more than formal; it is substantive. German idealism represents the terminus of the anthropological and epistemological thrust of medieval mysticism, wherein the theonomous nature of human being comes to the fore. As applied to German idealism "speculative" seems simultaneously to have two different uses with quite different ranges: a catchall that does not discriminate between the various German idealists, and as a *terminus technicus* in which it seems more nearly to refer to the Hegelian version of German idealism. Importantly, the term "speculative" is not totally reducible to Hegelian thought, despite the fact that the term plays a constitutive role from very early on in Hegel's career and crucially informs his major texts. This is clearly indicated by Martensen's references throughout his Eckhart piece to Fichte and Schelling. On a number of occasions, Martensen refers to the connection between Eckhart's mysticism and Fichte of *Answeisung zum seligen Leben* (181, 241). Martensen reinforces this particular connection by suggesting that the best way to understand Eckhartian mysticism, and German mysticism in general, is to consider that its fundamental aim is towards blessedness. The Danish term he uses (157) is *Salighed*, which is synonymous with the German *Seligkeit*, which is the key term in Fichte's reflections on what satisfies the desire of consciousness or, in other words, its eschatological aim.⁷⁵ Moreover, the connection between Fichte and Eckhart is hermeneutically reinforced by Martensen in his recognition of the significant role played by the Gospel of John in speculative mysticism (216–17). This is not to say that Schelling, who with Hegel introduces the term "speculative" into German thought, is marginalized as a "speculative" thinker (154). Still, it is evident that by contrast with Fichte, or at least Fichte as represented

⁷⁵ In contrast with Fichte *Seligkeit* is not a major category in any of Hegel's major texts. The choice of "blessedness" as the connector between Eckhartian mysticism and modern speculative thought is an interesting one, since at least in the historical Eckhart the category does not play a role in the elaboration of his thought.

by his 1806 text, the mystical drive in Schelling has a somewhat different complexion than that found in Fichte. In a critical judgement that agrees exactly with that of Baader, Martensen thinks of the work of Schelling as being more nearly in the wake of Jacob Boehme than Eckhart (239–43); in his view this accounts for the *Naturphilosophie* orientation of Schelling's thought.⁷⁶

Still, although not reducible to its effect on Hegelian thought, it is undoubtedly true that, in Martensen's view, it is in Hegelian speculation that Eckhartian mysticism finds in general its closest modern counterpart. Hegel's name is not explicitly mentioned more than the others; indeed, Hegel is referred to by name only three times (153–54, 183, 190 n. 78). There is, however, any number of clues pointing to the privilege that Hegel enjoys. First, the authority to whom Martensen appeals in order to make his general point about the recrudescence of mysticism in modern philosophical thought, that is, Karl Rosenkranz (154), belongs to the theological wing of Hegelianism which had influence in Denmark in the mid- and late 1830s.⁷⁷ Second, and more importantly, the Hegelian influence is betrayed by the linguistic and conceptual apparatus deployed by Martensen in his critical appropriation of Eckhart and the broader German mystical tradition. Martensen freely uses the Hegelian language of "mediation" (186), "differentiation" (187) and "non-differentiation" (186), "concept" (186), and "logical idea" (183), while endorsing the move beyond a dogmatic, institutional, and purely ethical form of Christianity. With Eckhart, Hegelian speculation calls for a move beyond images and concepts—thus in a sense a kind of "atheism"—in order to facilitate the uncovering of a deeper dimension of religiousness in which the human and the divine are tied together. Martensen, then, tends to make isomorphic Eckhart's iconoclasm with Hegel's mandate to move beyond *Vorstellung* to *Begriff*. At the same time, it is Hegel's thought, and arguably, Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, published by Baur in 1835, in particular, which provides the lens in and through which to comprehend the complex relations in Eckhart between mystery and revelation, mystery and knowledge,

⁷⁶ At the period of writing his piece on Eckhart, Martensen is quite familiar with the thought of Schelling and affirms his emphasis on personality and will. As time goes on, Schelling comes more and more into favor as the work of Boehme begins to loom large.

⁷⁷ For a brief account of the influence of Karl Rosenkranz's influence in Denmark, see Martensen, *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel*, 108–09, 202–03.

and the relation of both to the Trinity conceived more as a dynamic process than as a static tri-personal substance.⁷⁸

It should be said that the lens in and through which Martensen views Eckhart is far from uncritical. Martensen, for instance, suggests that, despite Eckhart's penchant for the apophatic, his particular brand of mysticism presupposes revelation and exploits its discourse and its narrative (185–88). Extrapolating on the tension between apophatic avowal and revelation presumption, Martensen believes that, just as Eckhartian mysticism can speak of the mystical union between the human and the divine, it can acknowledge the infinite qualitative difference between the divine and the creaturely realm (117). Similarly, despite the blurring of the boundaries between the divine sonship of Christ and that of the human being as such, some measure of distinction between Christ and other human beings is acknowledged, although the emphasis falls less upon discipleship than participation (213–14, 219–24). By and large, however, the moderating kataphatic dimension of mysticism is neither fully owned by Eckhart, nor by medieval mysticism in general. One of the essential ways in which modern speculative forms of thought surpass the medieval exemplars lies in the self-conscious way in which the kataphatic adjustment is enacted.

In the case of Hegel this means that nature and finite spirit are other than the divine precisely as a product of divine self-othering. Moreover, the Trinitarian differentiation of the divine enacts a more complex and satisfying unity than a simple undifferentiated divine. In speaking to the corrections of Eckhart, Martensen shows himself to be a remarkably acute reader of the real relation between Hegel and Eckhart. By no stretch of the imagination can Hegel be construed to reduplicate Eckhartian mysticism. Indeed, Martensen seems to see clearly how Hegel moves towards erasing any and every apophatic element of Eckhartian mysticism.⁷⁹ This is quite different from showing that, however radical the apophatic language of the mystical tradition is, in the final analysis it presupposes a positive core. In any event, against the backdrop of idealist appropriation Martensen effectively enacts a program of erasure, which, as it relativizes mystery, also disqualifies strict monism. The erasure of mystery is different in kind from the overcoming of Kant's more agnostic view of mystery and his fideistic

⁷⁸ At this early stage of his long theological career, Martensen has less at stake in being Trinitarianly orthodox than he will later in his career when he becomes bishop (1850).

⁷⁹ See my discussion of this phenomenon in *The Heterodox Hegel*, 43, 104–06.

successors, since mystery here involves metaphysical assumptions about the really real. In the section on Hegel I spoke to Hegel's diagnosis of the mechanisms in the traditions of "negative theology" through which mystery gets posited as a prius. In this passage Martensen follows what Hegel says in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* almost exactly:

Mystical consciousness moves, without knowing it, in a dialectical contradiction: it moves between two moments which it allows to remain outside of each other instead of bringing them together. Its contradiction consists in the fact that it seeks the Godhead outside of God, the esoteric behind the exoteric, that it wants to grasp the mystery behind and outside of the revelation. Mystical consciousness hypostatizes the abstract, pure essence, which ought to be only a vanishing dialectical moment in speculative thinking, as a self-subsisting sphere. (184)

Modern speculation knows what medieval German mysticism either does not know or does not know fully: thought—obviously a form of thought that has not reached all the way to *Vernunft*—has the tendency illegitimately to hypostatize an origin and to think of it outside the process of the dynamic of Being's self-manifestation.

The specific as well as the general objections to Eckhartian mysticism could not be more Hegelian. In addition, however, Martensen both desires to have Eckhart correct idealism and to take something of a theistic distance from both. The fundamental way in which mysticism corrects idealism is that it shows the difference between pantheistic implication and an explicitly worked out pantheistic system. Pantheism, Martensen avers, is not just the normal living element of philosophy. It is also the central living element of religion (176). Although philosophy would not be philosophy without some significant measure of reflection, and the "mystical" religion to which he refers transcends "exoteric" religion, nonetheless, Martensen is suggesting that the inclination towards pantheism that is a feature of mystical discourse is not conceptually validated. The advantage of mystical discourse is the other side of its disadvantage, that is, although reflective, and thus inflected by concept, compared to idealism its discourse is relatively first level. Religious problems, and specifically Christian problems, arise when pantheism becomes a position that is argued for. This can happen in idealism, and most certainly happens in Spinoza, and, although Hegel can be defended against the charge, Martensen concedes that Hegel makes himself vulnerable to it.

At the same time, Martensen wants to take his critical distance from both. After the manner of a number of theological critics of Hegel, including Baader, he suggests that the theistic and personalist features of

Christianity are at the very least underdeveloped in both Eckhartian mysticism and German idealism. Martensen's corrections are not only generically Christian and theistic, they also seem to be specifically Lutheran. Martensen worries about the Pelagianism, which he believes is the natural default not only of medieval German mysticism, but even more of those modern forms of speculation which repeat it (238).⁸⁰ Martensen believes it necessary to emphasize more than either Eckhart or Hegel the historicity of Christ, and to insist on the necessity of the Lutheran doctrine of justification as a presupposition for sanctification (237). Although, in one sense, these modifications, which come at the very end of the text, are ad hoc, and indeed may give the appearance of belated accommodations to orthodoxy,⁸¹ in another sense they are expressions of the fundamental principle that the Reformation represents an epochal event. This does not mean that every form of Protestantism is superior to medieval German mysticism. This would be to render nugatory its recommendation. Medieval German mysticism is in Martensen's view palpably superior to dogmatic forms of Protestantism; it is also superior even to Pietism, which evinces something of a mystical inflection (195–96), but lacks medieval German mysticism's speculative boldness.⁸² Nonetheless, Martensen wants to mark the qualitative difference between the thought of the Reformation and the mystical thought that precedes it (236). There are two different ways in which the difference is marked. The first is more historical-anecdotal. Martensen observes that in becoming the Reformer, Luther leaves behind a past in which there is serious engagement with the medieval mystical tradition and especially with Tauler and the *Theologia Germanica* (239).⁸³ The second way in which the difference is marked is more systematic. Martensen makes the non-self-evident claim that a constitutive

⁸⁰ Needless to say the repetition is not exact and thus non-identical.

⁸¹ This may very well have been the reading of Kierkegaard, who is familiar with Martensen's work from this period and which might explain his general hostility to mysticism as not only esoteric but immanentist.

⁸² There is a sense in which Martensen thinks that the logical as well as historical destination of pietistic thought is Schleiermacher's religion of "feeling" or more specifically "feeling of absolute dependence."

⁸³ Here, Martensen broaches crucial issues about the de facto and de jure relation between the thought of the Reformer and the German mystical tradition. That there is a de facto relation is undeniable; in fact, the pre-1517 Luther was something of an aficionado of mystical literature, with Tauler, the *German Theology* (which he edited twice), and even Eckhart. For the best account of the historical relation, which was indeed foresworn by Luther, see Steven Ozment, *Homo Spiritualis* (Leiden: 1969). The question of the principled compatibility has also been hotly debated. Heinrich Bornkamm and Eric Seeberg represent the poles of an argument, with the former denying compatibility, the latter affirming

feature of the Reformation is that it opens up the vista on the entire universe away from the constricted medieval focus on the individual self. For Martensen, this has the consequence that the specifically Protestant form of the mystical is theosophic, that is, portends a universal knowledge of the divine and its communication in a finite universe. Precisely for this reason, Jacob Boehme is the quintessential Protestant mystic (240–43). For Martensen, in modernity two species of authentic mysticism, that is, speculative mysticism, are left standing, the one Eckhartian and the other Boehmian. While the contrast is not intended to force a decision, the clear implication is that if a decision should have to be made, it is the Eckhartian that would have to yield. Martensen's position here is relatively continuous with the position advanced by F.C. Baur in *Die christliche Gnosis* (1835),⁸⁴ and Martensen may well have Baur's precedent in mind when he speaks of mysticism as a form of "gnosis" (225).⁸⁵ And it is not discontinuous with the thought of Baader. Although Baader is prepared to think of Eckhart as in some general respect Boehme's equal, even he, as a Catholic, thinks that, as a matter of fact, Boehme plays a much greater role in the rehabilitation of Christian discourse that has ossified.

Martensen's claim to have transcended Hegel or to have gone beyond him provokes Kierkegaard's derision in *Philosophical Fragments* and the *Postscript*.⁸⁶ While sneering is not in itself self-explanatory, it is clear that Kierkegaard thinks that Martensen is naive in presuming that one can accept speculation up to a certain point, and at a kind of critical threshold take precautions against the ways in which it evacuates traditional Christian belief, affect, and form of life. The immanent and pantheistic *Tendenz* in modern speculative thought is not only incorrigible, it is relentlessly aggressive. Christianity has no defense other than refusal. Logically speaking, Kierkegaard does not need to take the same stance against mysticism, however troubled he is concerning its maintenance of the alterity of God and the infinite qualitative difference between God and creatures,

it. See Bornkamm, *Protestantismus und Mystik* (Giessen: 1934); Seeberg, *Meister Eckhart* (Tübingen: 1954).

⁸⁴ Baur, *Die Christliche Gnosis oder die christliche Religionsphilosophie in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Tübingen: 1835). The English translators of Martensen's work make it clear that Martensen had read this text. See *Between Hegel and Kierkegaard*, 139 note 48, and especially 242.

⁸⁵ In fact, Martensen points to the precedent later on in the text. See 242.

⁸⁶ Steward rightly identifies Martensen as the prime referent in Kierkegaard's allusion to those who would go beyond Hegel. See *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel Reconsidered*, 345–55, 467 ff.

and however anxious he is about the status of ethical life,⁸⁷ and however closely Martensen had tied together mysticism (of a plenary type) and German idealism. But there exists some evidence that Kierkegaard followed Martensen in seeing the connection. In his *Journals* Kierkegaard observes the formal parallelism of speculative mysticism and Hegelianism: "The system begins with nothing; the mystic ends with nothing."⁸⁸ It is unimportant here that Kierkegaard is not entirely accurate about Hegel, since the first category of the system is Being rather than Nothing. The entry shows an interest in seeing that a mysticism that would trade in metaphysical categories and would or could regard Nothing as the ultimate category is indeed tied to idealism at a fundamental level. Thus, the rejection of one involves the rejection of the other.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

As an appropriator of Eckhart, Martensen represents both a closing and an opening. On the one hand, he represents a culminating instance of what one might call the cultural project in which Eckhart is enlisted with a view to rehabilitating philosophical thought, Christianity, and their relation. In romanticism, and especially in idealism, the cultural crisis is of such dimensions that Eckhart is simply a function of such enlisting. On the other hand, Martensen also represents an opening. First, he attempts at least to present Eckhart as is, and thus allows some potential critical distance between medieval mysticism and German romanticism and idealism as discourses of solution for problems either not solved in the Enlightenment or bequeathed by it. Second, at least occasionally—if not very successfully—Martensen distinguishes Eckhartian mysticism from German idealism and uses it to critique its pantheistic leanings and lack of commitment to ethics. Third, Martensen's historical sense, as well as his ability to understand differences between genres and levels of discourse, represent something like a harbinger of the kind of scientific/historical-critical analysis that begins with Pfeiffer and in general characterizes 20th-century scholarship, not only in the production of critical

⁸⁷ Somewhat ironically, Martensen is deeply concerned with the issue of ethics and writes on this topic on numerous occasions throughout his 50-year writing career.

⁸⁸ See *Søren Kierkegaard: Journals and Papers. Vol. 3*, ed. and trans. Howard K. Hong and Edna K. Hong (Bloomington, Ind.: 1975), 234.

editions of Eckhart's Latin and German works, but also in terms of analysis and interpretation.

Nevertheless, the mode of interpretation that Martensen brings to a close does not cease to be instructive in fundamental respects. While, at its worst, Eckhart is no more than pretext in the philosophical thought of Hegel and Fichte—and this is not totally untrue even in the case of Baader—still, it must be admitted that, however figural, Eckhart is far from being a historical curiosity. He does not simply fill the vocabulary of religious response in the medieval period, or show just how intellectually adventurous Scholasticism could be at its limits. The tradition of Eckhart, which belongs more broadly to the tradition of synthesis of Neoplatonic philosophy and Johannine Christianity, is of perennial value; indeed, it demands to be repeated in different circumstances and for different purposes. One could say that, if in its original context the function of Eckhartian mysticism is primarily to upset the complacency of the philosophical and theological traditions, as well as to question the assumptions behind certain practices, in the post-Enlightenment period the need is for a discourse that heals the wound between thought and affect, and between philosophy and religion. Baader agrees with both Fichte and Hegel on this score, although he becomes increasingly nervous about whether medieval speculative mysticism is being used to fund a post-Christian alternative to Christianity rather than being used to rehabilitate and refurbish Christianity itself. At any rate, Hegel, Fichte, and Baader give testimony to a culturally relevant Eckhart that is unmatched in the German intellectual sphere in the second half of the 19th and for much of the 20th century.

The qualification of the 20th century is necessary, for the century is marked by two moments which formally repeat the kind of interpretation observable in the above three figures, an interpretation which both continues and has its swan song in Martensen. The first moment is provided by Heidegger's appropriation. Heidegger's style of interpretation has little in common with a historical rendering of Eckhart, which would see him both as a product of a particular period and as mastering and being mastered by certain philosophical and religious discourses. Rather, Heidegger's work, both early and late, evinces a similar aim to what we found in the first half of the 19th century and also a similar agenda. The aim is to find a discourse that responds fruitfully to a cultural crisis of ever increasing fragmentation and perceived lack of contact with reality; the agenda is the non-identical repetition of a mystical form of discourse that elevates the discourses of philosophy and religion and does so by being both at once. The second moment is defined by the various forms of postmodern

thought which, although taking their inspiration from Heidegger, bring Eckhart into a new horizon of radical semiosis. If this second move is gestured to in Bataille's "atheology," it is completed in Derrida and the line of negative theologians that he sponsors, which include Mark C. Taylor and John Caputo. Once again Eckhart functions at the most global of levels, although now the aim has become aimless, and the agenda fully radicalized. Specifically, appropriation of Eckhart does not have healing the wound of disintegration as its aim; rather, Eckhart helps us recognize and embrace disintegration. At the same time, Eckhart does not—or at least should not—provide a conduit to a meta-discourse that resolves the stresses between philosophy and religion in general, and philosophy and Christianity in particular. Rather, Eckhart serves as a signpost to the blurring of definite borders between philosophical and religious discourses, and as an agent of dissolution of unvalidatable claims of both.

MEISTER ECKHART IN 20TH-CENTURY PHILOSOPHY

Dermot Moran

The manner in which Meister Eckhart has been viewed by scholars has changed considerably over the centuries.¹ Nevertheless, the bull *In agro dominico* of 27 March 1329 already points towards the future directions that Eckhart research would subsequently take. There Eckhart is described in threefold manner as “from Germany, a doctor of sacred theology (as it is said) and a professor of the Order of Preachers.”² These characterizations of Eckhart—his connection with the German philosophical and mystical tradition, his status as a University of Paris master and scriptural exegete, and his role as a theologian and vernacular preacher for the Dominican order—continue to frame the debate.

The revival of Eckhart during the 19th century uncovered many more Eckharts. Indeed, the basis for Eckhart’s growing popularity in the 20th century was laid during the 19th century when Eckhart was rediscovered by the romantics and by the idealists. Eckhart was initially revived by the eclectic engineer, Catholic romantic, Franz von Baader (1765–1841), a friend of Schelling, who discovered Eckhart through his reading of Boehme. Baader inspired Hegel to refer to Eckhart in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, quoting Eckhart’s saying that the eye with which we see God is also the eye with which God sees us.³ The 19th-century revival broadly represented Eckhart as a speculative, dialectical thinker. He was seen (with Albertus Magnus) as one of the first German philosophers, a forerunner to the Protestant Reformers, “the father of German

¹ See Ingeborg Degenhardt, *Studien zum Wandel des Eckhartbildes*, (Studien zur Problemgeschichte der antiken und mittelalterlichen Philosophie) 3 (Leiden: 1967).

² See “*In agro dominico*,” edited by Marie H. Laurent in his “Autour du procès de Maître Eckhart. Les documents des Archives Vaticanes,” *Divus Thomas* Ser. III, 13 (1936), 435–47; translation in Edmund Colledge and Bernard McGinn, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises and Defense* (New York: 1981), see esp. 77.

³ See G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, ed. G. Lasson (Hamburg: 1966), 257. See also Jean-Louis Vieillard-Baron, *Hegel et l'idéalisme allemande* (Paris: 1999), esp. 62–63, and Ernst Benz, *Les sources mystiques de la philosophie romantique allemande* (Paris: 1987).

speculation"⁴ (i.e. German idealism). Perhaps, more important (as Josiah Royce confirmed), because it was more influential, was Arthur Schopenhauer's (1788–1860) account of Eckhart's quietist overcoming of the will that compared him with the Indian Buddhist Sakyamuni in his *World as Will and Representation*.⁵

In the 20th-century, philosophical interest in Eckhart continued to expand on his influence and originality as the pre-Cartesian discoverer of subjectivity and infinity,⁶ harbinger of modernity, mystic preacher⁷ of loss of self, "detachment" (*Abgeschiedenheit*), going out from oneself, "innerness" or intimacy (*Innerlichkeit*), and living "without the why" (*ohne Warum*), themes that continue to bring Eckhart into comparison with Eastern philosophy. Eckhart is presented as having anticipated Descartes with his turn to subjectivity, and with his conception of the divine being as generated by His own self-understanding, which Richard Woods refers to as Eckhart's "Cartesian revolution."⁸ One also finds during the 20th cen-

⁴ See, for example, Josef Bach, *Meister Eckhart der Vater der Deutschen Spekulation. Ein Beitrag zu einer Geschichte der deutschen Theologie und Philosophie der mittleren Zeit* (Vienna: 1864) and, somewhat earlier, Ludwig Noack's chapter on Eckhart in his two-volume, *Die Christlich Mystik nach ihrem geschichtlichen Entwicklungsgange im Mittelalter und in der neueren Zeit dargestellt*, vol. 1 (1853), 280–96, which presents Eckhart as a mystic influenced by Dionysius the Areopagite.

⁵ See Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 2, trans. E.F.J. Payne (New York: 1969), 614–16, and Andrew King, "Philosophy and Salvation: The Apophatic in the Thought of Arthur Schopenhauer," *Modern Theology* 21, 2 (2005), 253–74.

⁶ See, for instance, Eckhard Wulf, *Das Aufkommen neuzeitlicher Subjektivität im Vernunftbegriff Meister Eckharts* (Tübingen: 1972); Burkhard Mojsisch, "'Dieses Ich.' Meister Eckharts Ich-Konzeption. Ein Beitrag zur 'Aufklärung' im Mittelalter," in *Das Licht der Vernunft. Die Anfänge der Aufklärung im Mittelalter*, ed. Kurt Flasch and Udo R. Jeck (Munich: 1997), 100–09; and Elizabeth Brient, *The Immanence of the Infinite: Hans Blumenberg and the Threshold of Modernity* (Washington, D.C.: 2002), 147–83.

⁷ Kurt Ruh, *Initiation à Maître Eckhart. Théologien, prédicateur, mystique* (Fribourg: 1997), has given the most detailed study of Eckhart as one of the Western mystics. See also John D. Caputo, "Fundamental Themes in Eckhart's Mysticism," *The Thomist* 42 (1978), 197–225.

⁸ Richard Woods, *Eckhart's Way* (London: 1986), 54. For a full bibliography of Eckhart works and studies see Niklaus Largier, *Bibliographie zu Meister Eckhart*, (Dokimion 9, Nouveaux suppléments à Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie) (Fribourg: 1989). For Eckhart's links with Japanese Buddhism see in particular the work of Shizuteru Ueda, a Kyoto professor and student of Nishitani. Ueda studied at Marburg. See his *Die Gottesgeburt in der Seele und der Durchbruch zur Gottheit. Die mystische Anthropologie Meister Eckharts und ihre Konfrontation mit der Mystik des Zen-Buddhismus*, (Studien zu Religion, Geschichte und Geisteswissenschaft) 3 (Gütersloh: 1965) and, more recently, "Eckhart und Zen am Problem 'Freiheit und Sprache,'" *Beihefte der Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 31 (Cologne: 1989), 21–92. Earlier, Rudolf Otto had compared Eckhart with Eastern mysticism in his "Meister Eckehart's Mystik im Unterschiede von östlicher Mystik," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* NS 6 (1925), 325–50 and 418–36.

ture a renewed interest in Eckhart's conception of the dialectical relation between human and divine intellect.⁹ During the 20th century, however, interest in Eckhart broadened and diversified: Eckhart has been discussed as the Thomist scholastic; Neoplatonic negative theologian;¹⁰ Rheinisch mystic;¹¹ freethinker;¹² accused heretic, and even feminist, Marxist;¹³ ecologist who respects God in nature;¹⁴ the apostle of freedom and "letting be;"¹⁵ postmodern transgressive deconstructionist;¹⁶ postmetaphysical

⁹ See, for instance, Josef Bach, *Meister Eckhart der Vater der Deutschen Spekulation. Ein Beitrag zu einer Geschichte der deutschen Theologie und Philosophie der mittleren Zeit* (1864); Gottfried Fischer, *Geschichte der Entdeckung der deutschen Mystiker, Eckhart, Tauler u. Seuse im 19. Jahrhundert* (1931); and Emanuel Hirsch *Die idealistische Philosophie und das Christentum* (1926). H.S. Harris's intellectual biography of Hegel, *Hegel's Development* (1972/1983), contains asides regarding Hegel's relationship to Eckhart, Boehme, Baader, and alchemy. Recently, Cyril O'Regan has published a massive and groundbreaking study of the mystical roots of Hegel's philosophy of religion, *The Heterodox Hegel* (1994). For a recent study see Theo Kobusch, Burkhard Mojsisch, and Orrin F. Summerell (eds.), *Selbst, Singularität, Subjektivität: vom Neoplatonismus zum deutschen Idealismus* (Amsterdam: 2002).

¹⁰ See for instance E. Zum Brunn and A. de Libera, *Maitre Eckhart. Métaphysique du Verbe et théologie négative* (Paris: 1984).

¹¹ See Jeanne Ancelet-Hustache, *Master Eckhart and the Rhineland Mystics* (New York and London: 1957). See also James M. Clark, *The German Mystics: Eckhart, Tauler, and Suso* (Oxford: 1949).

¹² Norman Cohn in the *Pursuit of the Millennium* (London: 1957) connects Eckhart with the Brethren of the Free Spirit. See also Robert Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages* (Berkeley: 1972) and Walter Wakefield and Austin Evans, *Heresies of the High Middle Ages* (New York: 1991). The basis of the connection is that Pfeiffer included in his edition the text known as "Schwester Katrei" ("Sister Catherine") which had a wide circulation in the Middle Ages and was associated with the Brethren of the Free Spirit. The disputed text "Schwester Katrei" can be found in Franz-Josef Schweitzer, *Der Freiheitsbegriff der deutschen Mystik. Seine Beziehung zur Ketzerei der Brüder und Schwestern vom Freien Geist, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des pseudoeckhartischen Traktates "Schwester Katrei,"* (Arbeiten zur Mittleren deutschen Literatur und Sprache) 10 (Frankfurt: 1981), 322–70, and is translated by Elvira Borgstädt in *Meister Eckhart. Teacher and Preacher*, ed. B. McGinn (New York: 1986), 347–84.

¹³ See Alois Haas, "Meister Eckhart im Spiegel der marxistischen Ideologie," in his *Sermo Mysticus: Studien zu Theologie und Sprache der deutschen Mystik* (Fribourg: 1979). Leslek Kolakowski sees Eckhart as part of a movement which sought a dialectical resolution between human self-fulfillment and divine fulfillment; see his *Main Currents of Marxism: Its Origin, Growth and Dissolution*, vol. 1 (Oxford: 1978), see the chapter entitled "The Origins of Dialectic."

¹⁴ See, for example, the chapter "Spiritual Ecology" in Carolyn Merchant, *Radical Ecology: the Search for a Livable World* (London: 1992), esp. 125–26, which cites the work of Matthew Fox on Eckhart as seeing creation as the expression of the divine.

¹⁵ See Udo Kern (ed.), *Freiheit und Gelassenheit. Meister Eckhart heute* (Munich: 1980).

¹⁶ See John D. Caputo, "Mysticism and Transgression: Derrida and Meister Eckhart," in *Derrida and Deconstruction*, ed. Hugh Silverman, *Continental Philosophy* 2 (1989), 24–39, and Caputo, "The Prayers and Tears of Devilish Hermeneutics: Derrida and Meister

theologian; the Eastern sage and the Zen Buddhist enlightened master.¹⁷ Eckhart also represents an important figure for contemporary theologians and philosophers of religion. He has often been championed by those wanting to counterbalance the more rigid prescriptions of the neo-Thomist revival with the challengingly paradoxical conception of the transcendent yet immanent God seen as a flowering of negative theology.¹⁸ He has been embraced for a more positive outlook than typically possessed by medieval theologians, due to the absence of a sustained concentration on sin, evil, and the consequences of the Fall.¹⁹ In this vein, the American former Dominican and now Episcopal priest Matthew Fox (b. 1940), a student of Marie-Dominique Chenu (1895–1990), interprets Eckhart in terms of what he, following Chenu, calls “creation spirituality,” an optimistic anthropological outlook that dwells not on original sin but rather on the createdness of human beings in the image of the divine, with an inborn likeness to God.²⁰ Similarly, Eckhart’s liberating conception of spirituality has been embraced for shaking off the overly defined conception of the divine found in ontotheology (“So therefore let us pray to God that we may be free of God,” Sermon 52²¹ *Beati paupers spiritu*) and offering a

Eckhart,” in John D. Caputo, *More Radical Hermeneutics: On Not Knowing Who We Are* (Bloomington: 2000), 249–64.

¹⁷ See, for instance, the articles collected in the special issue, *Chrétiens, bouddhistes, marxistes se mettent à lire Maître Eckhart: qui donc est Maître Eckhart?, La vie spirituelle* 124 (1971), 1–93. Already, in the last decade of the 19th century, Karl Eugen Neumann (1865–1915), who translated the Buddhist Pali canon, published a study, *Die innere Verwandtschaft buddhistischer und christlicher Lehre. Zwei buddhistische Suttas und ein Traktat Meister Eckharts, aus den Original-Texten übersetzt und mit einer Einleitung und Anmerkungen* (Leipzig: 1891). Subsequently Eckhart was linked with Eastern mysticism by Rudolf Otto (1869–1937) in his *West-östliche Mystik, Vergleich und Unterscheidung zur Wesensdeutung* (Gotha: 1929), trans. *Mysticism East and West: A Comparative Analysis of the Nature of Mysticism* (New York: 1932), and D.T. Suzuki, see his “Meister Eckhart and Buddhism,” *Mysticism Christian and Buddhist* (New York: 1971), 3–38, among others. See also Reiner Schürmann, “Trois penseurs du délaissement: Maître Eckhart, Heidegger, Suzuki,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 12 (1974), 455–77; vol. 13 (1975), 43–60. The most recent study is Hee-Sung Keel, *Meister Eckhart: An Asian Perspective*, (Louvain Theological & Pastoral Monographs) (Louvain: 2007).

¹⁸ See Vladimir Lossky, *Théologie négative et connaissance de Dieu chez Maître Eckhart*, 2nd ed., *Études de philosophie médiévale* 48 (Paris: 1973).

¹⁹ See Richard Woods, *Eckhart’s Way* (London: 1986), 45.

²⁰ Matthew Fox, *Creation Spirituality: Liberating Gifts for the Peoples of the Earth* (San Francisco: 1991). See also his *Passion for Creation: The Earth-Honoring Spirituality of Meister Eckhart* (Rochester, Vt.: 2000).

²¹ “*Her umbe sô bitten wir got, daz wir gotes ledic warden*,” DW II, 493; translated in Edmund Colledge and Bernard McGinn, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises and Defense* (New York: 1981), 200.

deeply charitable and loving way of living in witness to the divine²² that seems to overcome the dangers inherent in the institutionalization of religion. In this regard Eckhart has even been called insightfully a “mystic of everyday life.”²³

Twentieth-century *philosophers* of very different outlooks have been attracted to Eckhart, including existentialists (Karl Jaspers), phenomenologists (Martin Heidegger), Marxists (Ernst Bloch),²⁴ and postmodern theologians (John D. Caputo, Michel Henry), among many others (e.g. Josiah Royce). He has been embraced by thinkers such as Rudolf Otto, Martin Buber, and Erich Fromm. The existentialist psychiatrist and philosopher Karl Jaspers presents Eckhart as overcoming the subject–object divide;²⁵ others see him as developing a conception of the epistemological subject.²⁶ In the United States, Josiah Royce lectured on Eckhart at Harvard in 1915–16 and compared him to Bergson.²⁷ Hans Blumenberg, Karsten Harries, and Elizabeth Brient associate Eckhart with Nicholas of Cusa (1401–64) as mystics involved in bringing about the breakthrough to modernity through their manner of thinking the nature of the infinite,²⁸ through the discovery of subjectivity in the modern sense.²⁹ Other commentators (e.g. Kurt Flasch) emphasize Eckhart as a kind of proto-Kantian philosopher who

²² See Ellen Chris Fanizzi, “Subverting the *Ordo Caritatis*: Meister Eckhart’s Vision of Love” (PhD Dissertation: Boston College, 2000).

²³ Diemar Mieth, “Meister Eckhart. Authentische Erfahrung als Einheit von Denken, Sein und Leben,” in *Das “Einig Ein.” Studien zu Theorie und Sprache der deutschen Mystik*, ed. Alois M. Haas and Heinrich Stirnimann, Dokimion 6 (Fribourg: 1980), 11–62.

²⁴ See Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight, vol. 3 (Cambridge, Mass.: 1995), 1274ff.

²⁵ Karl Jaspers, *Von der Wahrheit* (Munich: 1947). See Heribert Fischer, *Meister Eckhart*, 8–9.

²⁶ See Burkhard Mojsisch, “Mittelalterliche Grundlagen der neuzeitlichen Erkenntnistheorie,” in *Renovatio et Reformatio. Wider das Bild vom “finsternen” Mittelalter. Festschrift für Ludwig Hödl zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Manfred Gerwing and Godehard Ruppert (Münster: 1985), 155–69.

²⁷ See Josiah Royce, *Metaphysics*, ed. William Ernest Hocking, Richard Hocking, and Frank M. Oppenheim (Albany, N.Y.: 1998), 188–96.

²⁸ See H. Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, Mass.: 1985). See also Karsten Harries, *Infinity and Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass.: 2001), esp. 160–83, and Elizabeth Brient, *The Immanence of the Infinite: Hans Blumenberg and the Threshold of Modernity* (Washington, D.C.: 2002), 147–83. The original study linking Eckhart to the infinite is Dieter Mahnke, *Unendliche Sphäre und Allmittelpunkt. Beiträge zur Genealogie der mathematischen Mystik* (Halle: 1937; repr. Stuttgart: 1966).

²⁹ See Eckhard Wulf, *Das Aufkommen neuzeitlicher Subjektivität im Vernunftbegriff Meisters Eckharts* (Tübingen: 1972). Wulf’s interpretation of Eckhart has been criticised by Udo Kern in his “gottes sein ist mein Leben.” *Philosophische Brocken bei Meister Eckhart* (Berlin: 2003).

understood the constitutive function of the understanding.³⁰ Still others see him, following Heidegger, as a philosopher who explores the very experience of a meditative thinking that overcomes representationalism.³¹ The French phenomenologist Michel Henry (1922–2002) has published a number of studies on aspects of Eckhart's ontology, focusing on the particular power of a receptive passivity that bypasses the usual opposition between activity and passivity.³² Given this forest of interpretations, how can we find our way to the "true" Eckhart—or is there an Eckhart for every age and taste? Assuredly, Eckhart is an extremely complicated and multifaceted thinker and there are serious hermeneutical problems associated with almost every way of interpreting him. He cannot be presented primarily either as a radical religious reformer or as a purely academic intellectual involved in scholastic dispute. Similarly, those who classify Eckhart as a mystic often hold a view of mysticism that opposes it to philosophy,³³ whereas, in fact, for many medieval philosophers, philosophy and mysticism cannot be opposed simply as the rational to the irrational (or super-rational). Similarly, the German vernacular sermons, although written in a different register, cannot truly be said to offer a deeper or more spiritual vision than the equally complex and inspiring Latin sermons.³⁴

To illustrate the kinds of problems that emerge, consider that, while Eckhart does represent a distinctively German turn in late Scholastic

³⁰ See Kurt Flasch, "Zum Ursprung der neuzeitlichen Philosophie im späten Mittelalter. Neue Texte und Perspektiven," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch der Görres-Gesellschaft* 85 (1978), 1–18, and Flasch, "Kennt die mittelaltliche Philosophie die constitutive Funktion des menschlichen Denkens? Eine Untersuchung zu Dietrich von Freiberg," *Kant-Studien* 63 (1972), 182–206.

³¹ See Erwin Waldschütz, *Denken und Erfahren des Grundes. Zur philosophischen Deutung Meister Eckharts* (Vienna: 1989).

³² See the three studies by Michel Henry: "Die ontologische Grundvoraussetzung des Eckhartschen Denkens und das Ursprungswesen des Logos," in *Meister Eckhart—Erkenntnis und Mystik des Lebens. Forschungsbeiträge der Lebensphänomenologie*, ed. R. Kühn and S. Laoureux, Seele, Existenz, Leben. 6 (Freiburg and Munich: 2008), 34–45, and Henry, "Die ontologische Bedeutung der Kritik der Erkenntnis bei Meister Eckhart," *ibid.*, 46–63, and his "Hinführung zur Gottesfrage: Seinserweis oder Lebenserpobung?," *ibid.*, 64–78. See Natalie Depraz, "Auf der Suche nach einer phänomenologischen Metaphysik. Der Bezug auf Meister Eckhart bei Michel Henry," *ibid.*, 135–58 and Natalie Depraz, "Seeking a Phenomenological Metaphysics: Henry's Reference to Meister Eckhart," *Continental Philosophy Review* 10, 3 (July 1999), 303–24.

³³ On this topic, see Theo Kobusch, "Lesemeistermetaphysik—Lebensmeistermetaphysik. Zur Einheit der Philosophie Meister Eckharts," in *Eckhart in Erfurt*, ed. Andreas Speer and Lydia Wegener (Berlin: 2005), 246ff.

³⁴ Kurt Ruh, for instance, is not alone in finding the German sermons more spiritual. For an excellent discussion, see Bernard McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart. The Man from Whom God Hid Nothing* (New York: 2001), 20–34.

thought (and not just because of his use of the vernacular), unfortunately, in the 1930s and 1940s, he was presented as exemplifying race by German National Socialist ideologues, such as Sigrid Hunke (1913–99) and Alfred Rosenberg (1893–1946, executed at Nuremberg), who called Eckhart “the apostle of the Nordic West” and saw him as a “noble soul” who opposed papal dogmatism.³⁵ A balance has to be struck. The effort to interpret Eckhart as a critique of ontotheology (based largely on his *Parisian Questions*) has to be balanced with the Eckhart who in his *Opus tripartitum* espouses the classical Thomist identification of God with pure being. Indeed, much recent scholarship on Eckhart (Goris, Haas, Sturlese, de Libera, McGinn, among others) represents a more nuanced critical reaction against earlier, more one-sided characterizations of his oeuvre.³⁶

One important advance in 20th-century scholarship on Eckhart is that it correctly approaches Eckhart not so much as an intellectual outsider but rather as belonging squarely within an older tradition of Christian theology inspired by Christian Neoplatonism, which had been renewed and reinvigorated in the 13th century by Albertus Magnus and the Cologne school. Eckhart has to be read as both belonging to and radically renewing the tradition of negative theological writers that runs from Proclus and Dionysius through Johannes Scottus Eriugena,³⁷ Maimonides,³⁸ Albertus

³⁵ Alfred Rosenberg's *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* (*Der Mythus des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts*, 1930) was an extremely influential National Socialist text that promoted race theories and the German Christianity of thinkers such as Eckhart. On the National Socialist view of Christianity, see Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919–1945* (Cambridge: 2003), esp. 95–112, and Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton, N.J.: 2008). See also the German (National Socialist aligned) medieval historian Herbert Grundmann (1902–70) who was very important in tracing the influence of Eckhart in German mysticism. See his discussion of Eckhart in *Die Grossen Deutschen* (Berlin: 1935).

³⁶ See Niklaus Largier, “Meister Eckhart: Perspektiven der Forschung, 1980–1993,” *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 114 (1995), 29–98 and his “Recent Work on Meister Eckhart. Positions, Problems, New Perspectives, 1990–1997,” *Recherches de Philosophie et de Théologie médiévales* 65 (1998), 147–67, and Jan A. Aertsen, “Meister Eckhart,” in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 3, ed. E. Craig (London: 1998), 286–88. For a helpful discussion, see Oliver Davies, “On Reading Meister Eckhart,” *Eckhart Review* 11 (Spring 2002), 4–10.

³⁷ Efforts to show Eriugena's direct influence on Eckhart have been elusive; see Kurt Ruh, “Johannes Scotus Eriugena Deutsch,” *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 99 (1988), 24–31. For a review of the latest scholarship connecting Eriugena's *Homily on the Prologue to St John* and Eckhart, see Jeffrey Hamburger, “Johannes Scotus Eriugena deutsch redivivus: Translations of the ‘*Vox spiritualis aquilae*’ in Relation to Art and Mysticism at the Time of Meister Eckhart,” in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt*, ed. A. Speer and L. Wegener (Berlin: 2005), 473–537. Eriugena was known through Honorius Augustodunensis's 12th-century summary, *Clavis physicae*.

³⁸ See Wolfgang Kluxen, “Die Geschichte des Maimonides im lateinischen Abendland als Beispiel einer christlich-jüdischen Begegnung,” in *Judentum im Mittelalter. Beiträge zum*

Magnus, and subsequently goes on to Nicholas of Cusa.³⁹ At the same time, as a Parisian academic and a Dominican theologian, Eckhart absorbed and in many ways reinterpreted the central tenets of the new Aristotelian philosophy of being promulgated by Thomas Aquinas and other neo-Aristotelians in the Paris Arts Faculty (some allegedly tainted with “Averroism”). The particular historical and social milieu of Eckhart’s German sojourn, including his complex relationship with women’s spiritual and devotional movements (often associated with extreme ascetic practices) of the late 13th century, must also be taken into account.⁴⁰ There is also a growing consensus confirming Eckhart’s orthodoxy or, at least, his orthodox intent, and this has been bolstered in the late 20th century by official moves by the Dominican order to rehabilitate his standing in Rome.⁴¹

Eckhart’s complex metaphorical language and particularly his use of analogy, metaphor, and evocative images have also been highlighted by scholars as new hermeneutical approaches to his complex texts, including his scriptural commentaries.⁴²

Along with this scholarly revival of interest intent on clarifying Eckhart’s cultural, intellectual, and linguistic context, there have been renewed efforts to interpret systematically his enigmatic pronouncements and to show the inner unity of his thought. The first challenge is to specify correctly the relation between Eckhart’s Scholastic writings (including the questions and commentaries) written in Latin, and his more mystical sermons written in Middle High German. In the 19th century, these two

christlich-jüdischen Gespräch, ed. Paul Wilpert, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 4 (Berlin: 1966), 146–66, and Hans Liebeschütz, “Meister Eckhart und Moses Maimonides,” *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 54 (1972), 64–96.

³⁹ See H. Wackerzapp, *Der Einfluß Meister Eckharts auf die ersten philosophischen Schriften des Nikolaus von Kues (1440–1450)*, ed. J. Koch, BGPTM 39, Heft 3 (Münster: 1962); see also the studies collected in Donald F. Duclow, *Masters of Learned Ignorance: Eriugena, Eckhart, Cusanus*, (Variorum) (Aldershot: 2006). See Brient’s chapter in the present volume.

⁴⁰ See, for instance, Bernard McGinn, *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics: Hadewijch of Brabant, Mechthild of Magdeburg and Marguerite Porete* (London: 1997). See Wegener, Marler in the present volume.

⁴¹ See the report by John Orme Mills OP, “Eckhart’s Standing Today,” *Eckhart Review* 13 (2004), 60–64.

⁴² See especially Frank Tobin, *Meister Eckhart: Thought and Language* (Philadelphia: 1986); Josef Koch, “Zur Analogielehre Meister Eckharts,” in *Mélanges offerts à Etienne Gilson*, (Études de philosophie médiévale) (Toronto-Paris: 1959), 327–50; Alain de Libera, *Le Problème de l’être chez Maître Eckhart. Logique et métaphysique de l’analogie*, (Cahiers de la Revue de Theologie et de Philosophie) 4 (Geneva: 1980); and Burkhard Mojsisch, *Meister Eckhart: Analogy, Univocity, and Unity*, trans. Orrin F. Summerell (Amsterdam: 2001).

sets of texts (in part due to the separate editions of Pfeiffer and Denifle) were seen to represent two distinct Eckharts: on the one hand, the more careful exegete writing for his academic peers; and, on the other, the unrestrained preacher attempting to communicate to an unlettered audience. Although Eckhart's German sermons were supposedly addressed to largely unlettered religious women in convents, in fact, Eckhart preached in *both* German *and* Latin and his sermons are replete with highly technical principles and concepts drawn from a diversity of classical and Scholastic sources (often simply cited as "a master says," *ein meister spricht*), including Aristotle, Augustine, Proclus, the *Book of Causes*, Dionysius, Aquinas, Albertus, Avicenna,⁴³ Averroes, Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed* (translated into Latin around 1240),⁴⁴ and the mystical *Book of the Twenty Four Philosophers*. Recent scholarship has sought to reunite these diverse Eckharts, emphasizing that his sermons and commentaries are both strongly rooted in Scripture and in the Christian philosophical tradition. Further, they were pitched at a very high-level and often to learned audiences.

ESTABLISHING CRITICAL EDITIONS AND AUTHENTICATING BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

The explosion of scholarly interest in Meister Eckhart in the 20th century⁴⁵ was squarely founded on the new editions of his writings that emerged from the mid-19th century onward, especially the groundbreaking editions of the German antiquarian and literary scholar Franz Pfeiffer (1815–68) and the Austrian Dominican Heinrich Suso Denifle (1844–1905). In 1857 Pfeiffer published a two-volume edition of his *German Mystics*, which

⁴³ In "On Detachment" Eckhart is able to find a text from Avicenna, *De anima* 4.4, which recommends detachment as the highest virtue; see Colledge and McGinn, 288.

⁴⁴ McGinn, *Eckhart. Teacher and Preacher*, 17: "No Christian author of the Middle Ages, however, knew Maimonides better or reflected greater sympathy for his views than did Meister Eckhart." See also, *Commentary on Exodus*, 90. See the chapter by Schwartz in the present volume.

⁴⁵ Recent developments include the establishment of an Eckhart research center at the Thomas Institut in Köln and the setting up two societies, the Eckhart Society (UK), and Meister-Eckhart-Gesellschaft, an international society for the promotion of the study and research into the life, writings, and reception of Meister Eckhart in an interdisciplinary context. The Dominican order has petitioned Rome for the removal of the judgement against Eckhart. Pope John Paul II quoted Eckhart in a sermon which was seen as a major step towards his official rehabilitation. An *Eckhart Jahrbuch* has appeared since 2007.

included many of Eckhart's sermons and tracts written in Middle German.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, if unsurprisingly, this edition of 110 sermons and some 18 tracts included many spurious or unattributed works. Soon after, in 1866, Denifle published a two-volume edition of Eckhart's Latin writings.⁴⁷ In part, Denifle's aim was to counteract an earlier view that presented Eckhart as a pre-Lutheran reformer by emphasizing Eckhart's grounding in the Scholastic theological tradition. He claimed that efforts to read Eckhart as a pantheist showed a misunderstanding of the Catholic approach to grace. Denifle emphasized Eckhart's relation to Thomas Aquinas (although he regarded the latter as the superior thinker) but also tended to downplay the German texts in favor of the Latin. Gradually, Eckhart began to be studied through his own texts—he appears, for instance, in Auguste Jundt's history of pantheism with several sermons collected in an appendix.⁴⁸

The pioneering work of Pfeiffer and Denifle was built on and corrected by subsequent scholars to provide the basis for the monumental critical editions of Eckhart's Latin and German writings that appeared in the 20th century by a heroic group of scholars, often working in adversity, including Josef Quint (1898–1976),⁴⁹ Josef Koch (1885–1967), Martin Grabmann

⁴⁶ Franz Pfeiffer, *Deutsche Mystiker der vierzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols: vol. 2, *Meister Eckhart. Predigten und Traktate*, 2 vols (Leipzig: 1857; repr. Aalen: 1962). Pfeiffer's edition posed problems due to the suspect nature of some of the attributions to Eckhart as well as in terms of the readings themselves. Many anonymous mystical texts were attributed to Meister Eckhart because of his fame or notoriety. The difficulty was compounded by the fact that Pfeiffer never published the promised volume explaining his methodology and selection process. Nevertheless, from the 1930s onward, Josef Quint built his edition, *Meister Eckhart, Predigten und Traktate* (Munich: 1955) on Pfeiffer, albeit drawing on many new manuscripts that had come to light; see Josef Quint, *Neue Handschriftenfunde zur Überlieferung der deutschen Werke Meister Eckharts und seiner Schule* (Stuttgart: 1940) and *Fundberichte zur handschriftlichen Überlieferung der deutschen Werke Meister Eckharts und andere Mystikertexte* (Stuttgart: 1969). For a discussion of the history of these editions, see Heribert Fischer, *Meister Eckhart* (Freiburg: 1974), 142–58.

⁴⁷ See H. Denifle, *Meister Eckharts lateinische Schriften und die Grundanschauung seiner Lehre*, (Archiv für Litteratur und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters) 2 (1886), 417–615.

⁴⁸ Auguste Jundt, *Histoire du panthéisme populaire au Moyen Age et au seizième siècle, suivie de pièces inédites concernant les Frères du libre esprit, maître Eckhart, les libertins spirituels, etc.* (Paris: 1875).

⁴⁹ The current critical edition is the ongoing Kohlhammer edition: *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, herausgegeben im Auftrage der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft (Stuttgart: 1936; repr. 1958), 11 vols. Quint devoted his life to this project and edited four of the projected five volumes of the German works (vol. 1, 1958; vol. 2, 1971; vol. 3, 1976; and vol. 5 containing the three genuine tractates in 1963) and the fourth volume has been edited by Georg Steer (2003). For more on Josef Quint, see *Festschrift für Josef Quint*, ed. Hugo Moser et al. (Bonn: 1964). Another excellent edition, with translation into modern German, is Joseph Quint, *Meister Eckhart: Deutsche Predigten und Traktate*

(1875–1949),⁵⁰ Gabriel Théry,⁵¹ Antoine Dondaine (1898–1987),⁵² Raymond Klibansky (1905–2005),⁵³ and others. Quint established a list of 86 genuine sermons (including 71 found in Pfeiffer) in his first three volumes, but more have since been identified and included in volume five (sermons 87 to 105). Popular interest in Eckhart was also stimulated by the appearance of modern German translations.⁵⁴

The appearance of the critical editions of his writings has been accompanied by a wealth of studies of Eckhart's life,⁵⁵ providing rich detail of the intellectual, cultural, and religious milieu, including the "process" around Eckhart's accusation and trial leading to his condemnation in the papal bull *In agro dominico* (1329).⁵⁶ Denifle, Théry, and others began what has come to be an intense and highly nuanced study of the documents surrounding Eckhart's trial.⁵⁷ We have learned, for instance, that Eckhart was

(Munich: 1955; 2nd edition, 1964). The normal convention is to refer to Eckhart as follows: DW = Deutsche Werke; LW = Lateinische Werke, followed by the volume number of the Kohlhammer edition.

⁵⁰ See Martin Grabmann, "Neue Eckhartforschungen im Lichte neuerer Eckhartfunde. Bemerkungen zu O. Karrers und G. Thérys Eckhartarbeiten," *Divus Thomas* 5 (1927), 74–96.

⁵¹ See Gabriel Théry, "Le commentaire de Maître Eckhart sur le livre de la sagesse," *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge* 3 (1928), 321–443 and 4 (1929), 233–394.

⁵² Dondaine edited Eckhart's *Parisian Questions* as part of the Leipzig edition *Magistri Eckardi Opera Latina*; see *Questiones Parisienses. Edidit Antonius Dondaine. Commentariorum de Eckardi magisterio adiunxit Raymundus Klibansky* (Leipzig: 1936). See Armand Maurer (ed.), *Master Eckhart: Parisian Questions and Prologues* (Toronto: 1974).

⁵³ See *Magistri Eckardi Opera Latina, I: Super oratione dominica*, ed. Raymundus Klibansky (Leipzig: 1934).

⁵⁴ See especially Hermann Büttner's 1903 translation, *Meister Eckeharts Schriften und Predigten. Aus dem Mittelhochdeutschen übersetzt und hrsg. von Hermann Büttner*. 1. Bd (Leipzig: 1903), 2. Bd. (Leipzig: 1909; repr. Düsseldorf: 1959). See also Otto Karrer, *Meister Eckehart spricht. Gesammelte Texte mit Einleitung* (Munich: 1926), trans. Elizabeth Strakosch as *Meister Eckhart speaks. A Collection of the Teachings of the Famous German Mystic*, with an introduction by Otto Karrer (London: 1957).

⁵⁵ Beginning with the work of Josef Koch, "Kritische Studien zum Leben Meister Eckhart. Ersten Teil: von den Anfängen bis zum Strassburger Aufenthalt einschliesslich," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 29 (1959), 5–51, reprinted in J. Koch, *Kleine Schriften* 1 (Rome: 1973), 247–347.

⁵⁶ See Gabriel Théry, "Édition critique des pièces relatives au procès d'Eckhart contenues dans le manuscrit 33b de la bibliothèque de Soest," *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge* 1 (1926/27), 129–268, and M.-H. Laurent, "Autour du procès de Maître Eckhart. Les documents des Archives Vaticanes," *Divus Thomas*, Ser. III, 13 (1936), 331–48; 430–47.

⁵⁷ See Heinrich Suso Denifle, "Actenstücke zu Meister Eckharts Process," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 29 (1885), 259–66 and his "Acten zum Prozesse Meister Eckeharts," *Archiv für Literatur- und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters* 2 (1886) 616–40. For recent studies see H. Stirnimann, H. and R. Imbach (eds.), *Eckardus*

not born in Hochheim but that “von Hochheim” was his family name. Enormous effort has been put into the social and religious context of the day and especially the social context of the sermons.⁵⁸ Kurt Flasch has written greatly on the social and historical background to Eckhart whom he reads as a philosopher in the context of the university and study centers of the period, rejecting any opposition between Eckhart’s supposed “mysticism” and his “scholasticism.”

STAGES ON LIFE’S WAY

It is now usual to divide Eckhart’s life into his periods in Erfurt, Paris, Strasbourg, and Köln. Eckhart was born in Tambach, Thuringia, around 1260, entered the Dominican order in Erfurt as a teenager, and at least part of his formation took place at Cologne in the house founded by Albertus Magnus in 1248 (it is also possible he studied in Paris at that time—he may even have been there when the 1277 condemnation was pronounced). He first lectured on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard in the Dominican *studium generale* at the abbey of Saint-Jacques (established by St Dominic and part of the University of Paris since 1220), in 1293–94. Only the first lecture (*Collatio in libros sententiarum*) of his course on the *Sentences* survives from this period.⁵⁹

Between 1294 and 1298 Eckhart was prior of the Dominican house in Erfurt and vicar of Dominican houses in Thuringia.⁶⁰ During this period he composed his *Talks of Instruction* (*Die rede der underscheidung*) in 23 chapters, derived from evening addresses to young Dominican students.⁶¹

Theutonicus, homo doctus et sanctus. Nachweise und Berichte zum Prozess gegen Meister Eckhart, Dokimion 11 (Fribourg: 1992).

⁵⁸ See Klaus Jacobi (ed.), *Meister Eckhart: Lebensstationen—Redesituationen* (Berlin: 1997).

⁵⁹ LW V, 3–26.

⁶⁰ See Andreas Speer (ed.), *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt* (Berlin/New York: 2005).

⁶¹ The dating is based on the fact that the manuscript heading has “Brother Eckhart” (*bruoder Eckhart*) and refers to him as “vicar of Thuringia” (*vicarius von Thüringen*, DW V, 185). Pfeiffer included this text among 18 tracts he thought genuine. Quint includes it as one of his three genuine tracts, see DW V, 185–309; translated as “The Talks of Instructio,” in M.O.C. Walshe, *Meister Eckhart. Sermons and Treatises*, vol. 3 (Longmead, Shaftesbury, Kent: 1990), 11–60. It is translated as “Counsels of Discernment” in *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatise and Defense*, ed. Edmund Colledge and Bernard McGinn (New York: 1981), 247–85. Wolfgang Wackernagel has analyzed the piece in his “Eloge du Redemeister: Discours et discernement dans le *Discours de discernement*,” in *Meister Eckhart: Lebensstationen, Redesituationen*, ed. Klaus Jacobi (Berlin: 1997). The German “Rede” means a kind of informal advice, the Latin term being “*collatio*.”

In this early work Eckhart is already promoting “self-abandonment,” the “empty spirit” that is “attached to nothing,” the “nakedness” that is “free of things.”⁶² In 1302 he returned to Paris to the Dominican chair of theology, by which time his master’s degree must have been conferred (the title “Meister” is thought to refer to his time as *magister*) as he had completed the necessary four years of post-bachelor lecturing. At Paris his duties as professor included exegetical commentary on biblical books, partaking in disputes (*disputationes*) on particular questions, and preaching. During this period, Eckhart composed the first two of his *Parisian Questions*. Eckhart was opposing the views of another Paris master, the Franciscan Gonsalvus of Spain (1255–1313) who was a promoter of the young Duns Scotus, who was lecturing on the *Sentences* in Paris from 1302. Eckhart had defended the thesis that the “the praise of God in heaven is better than the love of God on earth.” Gonsalvus opposed this position.⁶³ There was an ongoing dispute between Dominicans and Franciscans concerning the primacy of intellect over will or vice versa. Henry of Ghent had proposed the identity of God with pure being.

After just one year in Paris, Eckhart was once again assigned administrative duties, this time in the newly created province of Saxonia. The plan of the *Opus tripartitum* was probably drafted at this time. This was to contain three parts: *opus propositionum*, *opus quaestionum*, and *opus sermonum*. He returned for a third time to Paris to the chair of theology at Saint-Jacques from 1311 to 1313. From 1313 until 1323 he is in Strasbourg as a vicar and as prior of the Dominican convent, dealing with issues connected with the Brethren of the Free Spirit. During this period he composed “Of the Nobleman” (DW V, 109–19). Recent scholarship has placed new emphasis on Eckhart’s encounter with Beguine spirituality during his stay in Strasbourg.⁶⁴ The similarities between Mechthild of Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete, and Eckhart have been discussed by many contemporary

⁶² Colledge and McGinn (eds.), *Meister Eckhart. The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatise and Defense*, 248 and 254.

⁶³ See “La Question de Gonsalve d’Espagne contenant les raisons d’Eckhart,” trans. A. de Libera in E. Zum Brunn, Z. Kaluza, A. de Libera, P. Vignaux, and E. Wéber, *Maître Eckhart à Paris. Une critique médiévale de l’ontothéologie. Les Questions parisiennes n° 1 et n° 2 d’Eckhart*, études, textes et traductions, BEHE. Section des Sciences religieuses 86 (Paris: 1984), 200–23.

⁶⁴ See Wegener’s chapter in this volume for a counterargument.

scholars.⁶⁵ Eckhart's debt to religious women, the Beguines in particular, has also been emphasized.⁶⁶

Presumably Eckhart returned to Cologne around 1323 as regent master (*magister regens*) of the *studium generale* in which he had earlier studied.⁶⁷ Among his students at this time were Henry Suso and Johannes Tauler. Inquiries into his orthodoxy began in 1325 under Eckhart's Dominican superior Nicholas of Strasbourg and were made official in 1326 under the archbishop of Cologne, Henry of Virneberg.

Most of his German sermons belong to his later period. There are disputed issues around his authorship of certain works as well as the dating of certain works. For instance, Loris Sturlese has claimed that Eckhart's *Opus tripartitum* is to be located in Eckhart's time in Erfurt after his first Paris sojourn,⁶⁸ whereas Kurt Ruh has challenged the authenticity of the *Talks of Instruction*.

CHARACTERIZING ECKHART'S INTELLECTUAL OUTLOOK

Eckhart's complex relationship with Scholasticism and his association with different intellectual centers, including three periods at Paris, make it difficult to characterize with precision his intellectual position. As a Dominican theologian,⁶⁹ he clearly belongs to the tradition of Albertus Magnus⁷⁰ and Thomas Aquinas (Eckhart frequently quotes or alludes to both masters). He is also particularly connected with the so-called German

⁶⁵ Including Edmund Colledge, Oliver Davies, Herbert Grundmann, Romana Guarnieri, Bernard McGinn, Michael Sells, and Frank Tobin, among others. See Bernard McGinn (ed.), *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics: Hadewijch of Brabant, Mechthild of Magdeburg, and Marguerite Porete* (New York: 1994).

⁶⁶ See Amy Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife: Mechthild of Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete, and Meister Eckhart*, (Studies in Spirituality and Theology) 1 (Notre Dame: 1996).

⁶⁷ For a recent study see Loris Sturlese, "Die Kölner Eckhartisten. Das *Studium generale* der deutschen Dominikaner und die Verurteilung der Thesen Meister Eckharts," in *Homo divinus. Philosophische Projekte in Deutschland zwischen Meister Eckhart und Heinrich Seuse*, ed. L. Sturlese (Stuttgart: 2007), 119–35.

⁶⁸ See Loris Sturlese, "Meister Eckhart in der Bibliotheca Amploniana. Neues zur Datierung des 'Opus Tripartitum,'" in *Die Bibliotheca Amploniana*, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 23 (Berlin: 1995), 434–46.

⁶⁹ For Eckhart's relationship with the Dominicans, see William A. Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, vol. 2 (New York: 1973), 304–10.

⁷⁰ See for instance the articles in Maarten J.F.M. Hoenen and Alain de Libera (eds.), *Albertus Magnus und der Albertismus. Deutsche philosophische Kultur des Mittelalters* (Leiden: 1995). See also Ruedi Imbach (ed.), *Albert der Grosse und die deutsche Dominikanerschule*, (Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie) 32, 1–2 (1985).

Dominican school in Cologne, which included Dietrich of Freiburg (1250–1310), and later Berthold von Moosburg, Johannes Tauler, and others.⁷¹ In recent years, a group of German medieval scholars, the so-called “Bochum school” of scholars—Burkhard Mojsisch, Kurt Flasch, Loris Sturlese—have documented in detail Eckhart’s links with his immediate German milieu. Mojsisch and Sturlese, in particular, have explored Eckhart’s connection with Dietrich von Freiberg,⁷² a Dominican theologian at Paris who also worked on the intellect and whom Eckhart knew personally, although he is never mentioned by Eckhart in his works.⁷³ Much more is now known of Eckhart’s relationships with his teacher Albert the Great as well as with the broad school which included Ulrich of Strasbourg (ca. 1225–77), a movement known broadly as “Rheinish mysticism.”⁷⁴ A lively debate rages as to whether these German Dominicans can truly be said to constitute a “school” in the sense of maintaining a unified philosophical position.⁷⁵ It is undoubtedly the case that the Dominicans exercised intellectual dominance in Germany from the late 13th until the mid-14th century. Broadly speaking, the main tenets of this Albertist Dominican school are the understanding of God as pure intellect, the claim that human nature too is essentially intellect (a view earlier promulgated by Johannes Scottus Eriugena), and the claim that human intellect can attain to the intellectual

⁷¹ For the influence of Dietrich of Freiburg on Eckhart see especially N. Largier, *Zeit, Zeitlichkeit, Ewigkeit. Ein Aufriss des Zeitproblems bei Dietrich von Freiberg und Meister Eckhart*, (Deutsche Literatur von den Anfängen bis 1700) (Bern/Frankfurt: 1989), Kurt Flasch (ed.), *Von Meister Dietrich zu Meister Eckhart* (Hamburg: 1987), and also K.-H. Kandler, B. Mojsisch, and Fr.-B. Stammkötter (eds.), *Dietrich von Freiberg. Neue Perspektiven seiner Philosophie, Theologie und Naturwissenschaft*, (Bochumer Studien zur Philosophie) 28 (Amsterdam: 1999).

⁷² On Dietrich see Loris Sturlese, *Dokumente und Forschungen zu Leben und Werk Dietrichs von Freiberg* (CPTMA) 3 (Hamburg: 1984). See also Dietrich von Freiberg, *Opera Omnia, Schriften zur Intellekttheorie*, ed. Burkhard Mojsisch, CPTMA 1 (Hamburg: 1977). Dietrich’s *Tractatus de intellectu et intelligibili* has been translated by Markus Führer as *Treatise on the Intellect and the Intelligible* (Milwaukee: 1992).

⁷³ See the studies of Niklaus Largier, Wouter Goris, and Norbert Winkler, in Karl-Hermann Kandler, Burkhard Mojsisch, and Franz-Bernhard Stammkötter (eds.), *Dietrich von Freiberg: neue Perspektiven seiner Philosophie, Theologie, und Naturwissenschaft: Freiburger Symposion, 10–13 März 1997*, (Bochumer Studien zur Philosophie) 28 (Amsterdam: 1999).

⁷⁴ Alain de Libera, *Introduction à la mystique rhénane: d’Albert le Grand à maître Eckhart*, (Sagesse chrétienne) 3 (Paris: 1984) and earlier Jeanne Ancelet-Hustache, *Maître Eckhart et la mystique rhénane* (Paris: 1956).

⁷⁵ See Niklaus Largier, “Die ‘deutsche Dominikanerschule’: Zur Problematik eines historiographischen Konzepts,” in *Geistesleben im 13. Jahrhundert*, ed. J.A. Aertsen and A. Speer, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia Sonderdruck* (Berlin: 2000), 200–13. See also Oliver Davies, *Meister Eckhart: Mystical Theologian*, 91–93.

vision that God Himself enjoys.⁷⁶ Albertus and his followers maintain an older Augustinian psychology that sees the soul as an entity independent of the body which, although not identical with intellect, contains the originally pure intellect directly illuminated by God.⁷⁷ Dietrich of Freiberg disagreed with Thomas on the relationship between being and essence; for him it is not a real distinction, as for Thomas, but rather essence and existence are two ways of signifying the same thing.

As the 19th-century commentators already recognized, Eckhart must also be situated in an older Christian Neoplatonic tradition of *Einheits-metaphysik* which prioritizes thinking the divinity (*Gottheit*) as a transcendent, infinite, unnameable One (as Werner Beierwaltes,⁷⁸ Theo Kobusch, and others have done).⁷⁹ Eckhart is certainly familiar with the Neoplatonic negative theology, especially as found in the Christian followers of Proclus, mediated through Pseudo-Dionysius or the *Liber de causis*,⁸⁰ but also with the strong influence of Maimonides. In recent years, also, there has been a plethora of works devoted to apophatic theology and spiritu-

⁷⁶ See Kurt Flasch, "*Procedere ut imago*. Das Hervorgehen des Intellekts aus seinem göttlichen Grund bei Meister Dietrich, Meister Eckhart und Berthold von Moosburg," in *Abendländische Mystik im Mittelalter. Symposium Kloster Engelberg 1984*, ed. Kurt Ruh, Germanistische Symposien 8 (Stuttgart: 1986), 125–34 and Burkhard Mojsisch, "Dynamik der Vernunft' bei Dietrich von Freiberg und Meister Eckhart," *ibid.*, 135–44.

⁷⁷ See Markus Führer, "The Agent Intellect in the Writings of Meister Dietrich of Freiburg and its Influence on the Cologne School," in *Dietrich von Freiberg: neue Perspektiven seiner Philosophie, Theologie, und Naturwissenschaft: Freiburger Symposium, 10–13 März 1997*, ed. Karl-Hermann Kandler, Burkhard Mojsisch, Franz-Bernhard Stammkötter (see note 73 above), 69–88.

⁷⁸ See W. Beierwaltes, "'Und daz Ein machet uns saelic.' Meister Eckharts Begriff der Einheit und der Einung," in Werner Beierwaltes, *Platonismus im Christentum*, (Philosophische Abhandlungen) 73 (Frankfurt am Main: 1998), 100–29. See also Wouter Goris, *Einheit als Prinzip und Ziel: Versuch über die Einheitsmetaphysik des Opus tripartitum Meister Eckharts* (Leiden: 1997).

⁷⁹ See, for instance, Wouter Goris, "Ontologie oder Henologie: Zur Einheitsmetaphysik Meister Eckharts," in *Was ist Philosophie im Mittelalter*, ed. Jan Aertsen and Andreas Speer, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 26 (Berlin: 1998), 694–703.

⁸⁰ See Werner Beierwaltes, "'Primum est dives per se.' Maître Eckhart et le *Liber de causis*," in *Voici Maître Eckhart. Textes et études réunis*, ed. E. Zum Brunn (Grenoble: 1994), 285–300, and Vladimir Lossky, *Théologie négative et connaissance de Dieu chez Maître Eckhart* (Paris: 1960).

ality by, among others, Jean-Luc Marion,⁸¹ Michael Sells, Denys Turner,⁸² Deirdre Carabine, and Thomas Carlson.⁸³

God, for Eckhart, following the Christian Neoplatonic negative tradition, is such complete simplicity and unity as to be entirely ineffable. Thus Eckhart says in Sermon 26 *Nolite timere eos qui corpus occidunt*: "Everything that is in the Godhead is one, and of that there is nothing to be said."⁸⁴ In this context he elevates God above being and yet, in several of his works, notably his *Opus tripartitum*, retains Thomistic and Scholastic formulations that one and being are convertible, *ens et unum convertuntur*. Thus in the *Commentary on Exodus*, a particularly important biblical text since it contains the "I am who am" (Exodus 3:14) statement that motivated St Augustine and others to identify God with Being. For Eckhart, as for the Christian tradition, God is the "I am who am" of Exodus, as well as "that which is" "what it is." Eckhart identifies the one with being.⁸⁵ God is being, *esse*, that which is, the identity of essence and existence;⁸⁶ necessary being.⁸⁷ However, in his *Parisian Lectures*, Eckhart says God cannot be called *esse* and prefers to refer to Him as intellect which is prior to being. Thus Eckhart can write that God's act of understanding is His very existence, "God exists because He understands" (*quia intelligit, ideo est*).⁸⁸

⁸¹ See for example, Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: 1991). Marion argues that "God is love" places "love" before being. Whereas creatures are dependent on their being, the same is not true for God. For Marion, God does not fall within the dominion of Being but comes to humans as a gift. Marion therefore is rejecting ontotheological conceptions of the divine and embracing rather the tradition of Pseudo-Dionysius.

⁸² See Denys Turner, "Meister Eckhart and The Cloud on Interiority, Detachment and Paradox," *Eckhart Review* (1992), 9–26; Turner, "Meister Eckhart: Dualist or Monist?," *Eckhart Review* (Spring, 1997), 40–50; and his "The Art of Unknowing: Negative Theology in Late Medieval Mysticism," *Modern Theology* 14, 4 (October, 1998), 473–88.

⁸³ See Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings* (Chicago: 1994); Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: 1995); Thomas A. Carlson, *Indiscretion: Finitude and the Naming of God* (Chicago: 1999), and Oliver Davies and Denys Turner (eds.), *Silence and the Word: Negative Theology and Incarnation* (Cambridge: 2002).

⁸⁴ Translated in M.O'C. Walshe, *Meister Eckhart. Sermons and Treatises*, vol. 2 (Longmead, Shaftesbury, Dorset: 1987), 81.

⁸⁵ *Commentary on Exodus*, in *Meister Eckhart. Teacher and Preacher*, ed. B. McGinn (New York: 1986), 87. The Latin text is LW II, 1–227.

⁸⁶ *Commentary on Exodus*, in *Meister Eckhart. Teacher and Preacher*, ed. B. McGinn, LW II, 94.

⁸⁷ "Only God's existence is necessary existence," McGinn, *Meister Eckhart. Teacher and Preacher*, 95.

⁸⁸ Eckhart, *Paris Questions*, in A.A. Maurer, *Meister Eckhart. Parisian Questions and Prologues* (Toronto: 1974), Question I, 43–45; LW V, 40.

Eckhart maintains that being always presupposes the knowing of intellect. Absolute knowing, considered in itself, can be understood as without being or prior to being.

In his *Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, Eckhart claims that the divine assertion “I Am Who Am” involves a repetition that

indicates the purity of affirmation excluding all negation from God. It also indicates a reflexive turning (*reflexa conversio*) back of his existence into itself and upon itself and its dwelling and remaining fixed in itself. It further indicates a ‘boiling’ or giving birth to itself—glowing in itself, and melting and boiling in and into itself, light that totally forces its whole being in light and into light and that is everywhere totally turned back and reflected upon itself, according to that saying of the sage, ‘The Monad gives birth to’ (or gave birth to) ‘the monad and reflected love or ardent desire back into itself.’⁸⁹

Eckhart stresses both the transcendent Oneness of the divine and also that God is being or “is-ness” (*Istigkeit*). From Eriugena (following Dionysius), he also speaks of God as “nothingness.” Johannes Scottus Eriugena understands God as “nothingness” (*nihilum*, *Periphyseon* III.685a) and as the negation of essence (*negatio essentiae*, I.462b) and says that God is “not this nor that nor anything” (*nec hoc nec illud nec ullum ille est*, I.510c). The “nothingness” of creatures is a common theme—deriving from St Augustine and developed also by Eriugena and others. St Augustine claimed that the creature, considered apart from God, is a mere nothing. Eckhart constantly reinforces this message. For Eckhart, the transcendent nothingness of God and the dependent nothingness of creatures are mirrors of each other. His thought seeks to mediate the tension between these spheres of nothingness. It is precisely this emphasis on nothingness that attracted Heidegger.

In the remainder of this chapter, then, I shall focus on what I regard as the most powerful and influential philosophical interpretations of Eckhart by 20th-century European thinkers, particularly Martin Heidegger and his followers, notably his Marburg student Käte Oltmanns (who wrote a thesis on Eckhart) and Reiner Schürmann (1941–93), a highly regarded professor at the New School for Social Research in New York, and an influential

⁸⁹ See Meister Eckhart, *Commentary on Exodus*, ch. 1, 16, in *Meister Eckhart. Teacher and Preacher*, ed. B. McGinn, 46. The reflexive turning back is from the *Liber de causis*. The quotation of the Sage is from the *Book of the Twenty-Four Philosophers*. See also A.A. Maurer, *Meister Eckhart. Parisian Questions and Prologues* (Toronto: 1974), Appendix, 108.

commentator and interpreter of the work of Eckhart.⁹⁰ I shall also discuss the interpretation of Eckhart as a critic of ontotheology and indeed as a postmodern proponent of *différance*.

ECKHART AND HEIDEGGER: *GELASSENHEIT*

Perhaps the most important 20th-century philosopher to have taken up Eckhart is Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), so it is necessary here to examine his unorthodox approach in some depth. Heidegger was deeply influenced by Meister Eckhart both directly through his own texts and through citations of Eckhart to be found in the German poet Angelus Silesius (also known as Johannes Scheffler, 1624–77). In addition, several of Heidegger's circle, including his student Käte Oltmanns and his old friend from his native village of Messkirch, Fr Bernhard Welte (1906–83),⁹¹ wrote on Eckhart. Furthermore, many philosophers, including Reiner Schürmann, Friedrich-Wilhelm von Hermann,⁹² Jean Greisch,⁹³ and John D. Caputo,⁹⁴ have also contributed significantly to the discussion of the complex relation between Heidegger and Eckhart.⁹⁵ Recently, for instance, the

⁹⁰ See Reiner Schürmann, *Wandering Joy: Meister Eckhart's Mystical Philosophy*, translation and commentary by Reiner Schürmann, foreword by David Appelbaum (Great Barrington, Mass.: 2001). Schürmann was himself influenced by Bernhard Welte, who lectured on Eckhart at Freiburg, was close to Heidegger, and gave the graveside oration on his death; see B. Welte, *Meister Eckhart. Gedanken zu seinen Gedanken* (Freiburg: 1979).

⁹¹ Bernhard Welte, *Meister Eckhart. Gedanken zu seinen Gedanken* (Freiburg: 1979; reprinted with a Foreword by Alois Haas, 1992). Heidegger's correspondence with Bernhard Welte has been published as Martin Heidegger–Bernhard Welte, *Briefe und Begegnungen* (Stuttgart: 2003).

⁹² See Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, *Wege ins Ereignis: zu Heideggers "Beiträgen zur Philosophie"* (Frankfurt: 1994). Von Herrmann details the volumes of Eckhart that Heidegger possessed in his own library.

⁹³ See Jean Greisch, "La contrée de la sérénité et l'horizon de l'espérance," in *Heidegger et la question de Dieu*, ed. Richard Kearney (Paris: 1980), and Greisch, "Warum denn das Warum? Heidegger und Meister Eckhart: Von der Phänomenologie zum Ereignisdenken," in *Heidegger und die christliche Tradition. Annäherung an ein schwieriges Thema*, ed. N. Fischer and F.W. von Herrmann (Hamburg: 2007), 129–47.

⁹⁴ See John D. Caputo, "Meister Eckhart and the Later Heidegger, Part I," *The Journal of the History of Philosophy* 12 (1974), 479–94, and his "Meister Eckhart and the Later Heidegger, Part II," *The Journal of the History of Philosophy* 13 (1975), 61–80. See also his *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought* (New York: 1986; repr. 1990).

⁹⁵ For recent studies see Barbara Dalle Pezze, *Martin Heidegger and Meister Eckhart: A Path towards Gelassenheit* (Lewistown, N.Y.: 2008) and Bret W. Davis, *Heidegger and the Will. On the Way to Gelassenheit* (Evanston: 2008). See also Barbara Mahoney, *Denken als Gelassenheit* (Freiburg: 1993); Hans-Joachim Simm (ed.), *Von der Gelassenheit: Texte zum Nachdenken* (Frankfurt: 1995); and Wolfgang Schirmacher, *Technik und Gelassenheit—Zeitkritik nach Heidegger* (Freiburg: 1983).

relationship between Heidegger's *Gelassenheit* and the concept of *wu-wei* in Taoism has been examined.⁹⁶ Heidegger focuses on Eckhart's central concept: *Gelassenheit*, often translated as "letting be," and on his concept of the abandonment of self-willing.

Already in his Habilitation thesis of 1915 on "Duns Scotus's Doctrine of the Categories and of Meaning" Heidegger promises a future study of Eckhart.⁹⁷ He also proposed a lecture course on Eckhart in Freiburg in 1919, which, however, was never given. His 1916 lecture "Die Zeitbegriff in der Geschichtswissenschaft" ("The Concept of Time in Historical Science") begins with a quotation from Eckhart concerning the simplicity of eternity in contrast to the changeability and multiplicity of time.⁹⁸ Heidegger was clearly reading Eckhart closely. In a letter of 22 January 1919 to his wife Elfriede, he says that he has been reading Eckhart in the edition of Ernst Diederichs⁹⁹ (he commends the edition but dismisses the editor's introduction as "worthless") and remarks that he learned that some of Eckhart's sermons had been published along with Tauler's in Adam Petri's Basel edition of 1521.¹⁰⁰ In one lecture from the 1930s Heidegger even claims that German philosophy begins with Eckhart, and he continues to invoke Eckhart especially in his lectures and talks during the 1940s and 1950s.¹⁰¹ For instance, in his 1949 short piece, *Der Feldweg* ("The Country Path"), he refers to Eckhart as the "old master of reading and of life:"

In the unspoken of his speech, as the old Master of Reading and of Living Meister Eckhart said, is God first God. (*Im ungesprochenen ihrer Sprache ist, wie der alte Lese- und Lebe-meister Eckehardt sagt, Gott erst God*).¹⁰²

⁹⁶ See Yen-Hui Lee, *Gelassenheit und Wu-Wei: Nähe und Ferne zwischen dem späten Heidegger und dem Taoismus* (Freiburg, doctoral dissertation: 2001).

⁹⁷ Heidegger's thesis is reprinted in M. Heidegger, *Die Kategorien- und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus, Frühe Schriften* (Frankfurt: 1972), 133–350; see esp. 344. At this point Heidegger opposes the contrast between "Scholastic" and "mystic" and talks of the need for a phenomenological account of life. See Otto Pöggeler, "Mystical Elements in Heidegger's Thought and Paul Célan's Poetry," trans. Henry Pickford, in *Word Traces: Readings of Paul Celan*, ed. Aris Fioretos (Baltimore, Md.: 1994), 75–109.

⁹⁸ See Heidegger, *Frühe Schriften*, 357.

⁹⁹ Ernst Diederichs (ed.), *Meister Eckharts Reden der Unterscheidung*, (Kleine Texte für Vorlesungen und Übungen) 117 (Bonn: 1913).

¹⁰⁰ See Martin Heidegger, *Letters to his Wife 1915–1970*, ed. Gertrud Heidegger, trans. R.D.V. Glasgow (Cambridge: 2010), 61–62. Indeed, Petri's edition remained the only source of access to Eckhart's sermons until Pfeiffer's edition. Adam Petri was a member of the famous Basel family of printers.

¹⁰¹ Reiner Schürmann in particular has attempted to document the places where Heidegger speaks of Eckhart.

¹⁰² M. Heidegger, "Der Feldweg," in *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens 1910–1976*, (Gesamtausgabe [= "GA"]) 13 (Frankfurt: 1983), 89.

Crucially, Heidegger makes use of certain central Eckhartian notions, most notably “letting be” (*Gelassenheit*), “detachment” or “releasement” (*Abgeschiedenheit*; *MHG abgescheidenheit*), and the notion of the “without why” (*ohne Warum*).¹⁰³

Undoubtedly Heidegger's most influential interpretation of Meister Eckhart is to be found in a slim volume entitled *Gelassenheit* (1959), which includes two texts: a 1955 talk entitled simply “*Gelassenheit*,” and a “conversation” (*Gespräch*) entitled “Towards an Explication of *Gelassenheit*: From a Conversation on a Country Path about Thinking” (“*Zur Erörterung der Gelassenheit. Aus einem Feldweggespräch über das Denken*”).¹⁰⁴ In fact, this latter text is a truncated excerpt from a much longer dialogue written by Heidegger a decade earlier, in 1944–45. The full version has now appeared in Heidegger's *Gesamtausgabe* volume 77.¹⁰⁵ According to the editor Ingrid Schlüssler, the version originally published in 1959 represents only the last third of the version now available.¹⁰⁶

In this text Heidegger's main focus is to elucidate the nature of “meditative thinking” (*Nachdenken, Besinnung*), its peculiar character of *letting be* or “releasement” (*Gelassenheit*) in relation to the overwhelming dominance of the framework of technological thinking, and the need for “rootedness” (*Bodenständigkeit*). For Heidegger, this “letting be” offers an opening in space and time that allows for a kind of counter-thinking or thinking “otherwise.” The occasion for Heidegger's talk, delivered in his birthplace of Messkirch, was the relatively inauspicious 175th anniversary of the birth of a local composer Contradin Kreutzer (1780–1849). Heidegger is here practicing an Eckhartian-style sermon, given to local people not particularly tutored in philosophy or theology, warning of a current danger and suggesting a helpful practice to overcome the danger. This short

¹⁰³ For a study of these terms in Eckhart, see Erik Alexander Panzig, *Gelâzenheit und Abegescheidenheit. Eine Einführung in das theologische Denken des Meister Eckhart* (Leipzig: 2005).

¹⁰⁴ Heidegger's talk was originally published as a pamphlet, entitled *Gelassenheit* (Pfullingen: 1959; reprinted Klett-Cotta, 13th edition 2004). The dialogue, “*Zur Erörterung der Gelassenheit Aus einem Feldweggespräch über das Denken*,” was reprinted in *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens 1910–1976*, (GA) 13 (Frankfurt: 1983), 37–74, while the “*Gelassenheit*” talk has been reprinted in M. Heidegger, *Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges 1910–1976*, ed. Hermann Heidegger, GA 16 (Frankfurt am Main: 2000), 517–33. An English translation of *Gelassenheit* is to be found as “Memorial Address” in M. Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: 1966), 43–57.

¹⁰⁵ See M. Heidegger, *Feldweg-Gespräche (1944/45)*, (GA) 77 (Frankfurt: 1995).

¹⁰⁶ See Ingrid Schlüssler, “*Nachwort der Herausgeberin*,” in M. Heidegger, *Feldweg-Gespräche (1944/45)*, 246.

talk does not even mention Eckhart by name, but, in the talk, Heidegger does refer to an “old word,” which he calls “letting be” or “releasement toward things” (*die Gelassenheit zu den Dingen*).¹⁰⁷

In this Messkirch address, Heidegger’s “first word” in his home village is the word “thanks.” He goes on to link the “thoughtlessness” and “thanklessness” (*Gedanken-losigkeit*) of much of our modern living which may be characterized as a “flight from thinking” (*Flucht vor dem Denken*). Thinking today has essentially been transmuted into “calculation” (*Rechnen*), investigating, and planning, which must be contrasted with meditative thinking (*Besinnung*)—a term much favored also by Heidegger’s mentor Edmund Husserl. Meditating, Heidegger insists, is not something high-flown and abstract; rather, it concerns what is closest to us. Moreover, meditative thinking requires grounding; it flowers in a homeland just as a work of art does. Thinking requires a certain kind of “groundedness” or “rootedness” (*Bodenständigkeit*).

According to Heidegger, scientific calculative thinking is everywhere and nowhere more evident than in the pursuit of nuclear power and the biotechnological control of the life process itself. The current age is the nuclear age and an age characterized by technological efficiency:

Nature becomes a gigantic gasoline station, an energy source for modern technology and industry. (*Die Natur wird zu einer einzigen riesenhaften Tankstelle, zur Energiequelle für die moderne Technik und Industrie*).¹⁰⁸

But much more dangerous than the atom bomb is the capacity of scientists to technologically interfere with the life process itself. Heidegger in 1955 is fully aware of the dominance of technology and calculative thinking and its apparent inescapability. As a result of this technological upheaval, modern humans have lost their “rootedness” (*Bodenständigkeit*, GA 16, 526). No one has thought through precisely what this reliance and pursuit of technology is doing to us:

Yet it is not that the world is becoming entirely technical which is really uncanny (*das eigentlich Unheimliche*). Far more uncanny is our being unprepared for this transformation of world (*Weltveränderung*), our inability to confront meditatively what is really dawning in this age...¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Heidegger, *Gelassenheit* (Stuttgart: 2004), 23; *Discourse on Thinking*, 54; GA 16, 527.

¹⁰⁸ Heidegger, *Gelassenheit*, 18; *Discourse on Thinking*, 50; GA 16, 523.

¹⁰⁹ Heidegger, *Gelassenheit*, 20; *Discourse on Thinking*, 52, trans. modified; GA 16, 525.

The intrinsic “sense” of the technological world is hidden from us (*Der Sinn der technischen Welt verbirgt sich*, GA 16, 527). The danger is that calculative thinking may be considered the only kind of thinking, in which case humans would have abandoned their nature as meditative beings. Heidegger then proceeds to offer an interpretation of what a detached attitude to technology should involve. Meditative thinking with its “rootedness” (*Bodenständigkeit*) must harbor the possibility for humans to say both “yes and no” to technology (GA 16; 527), both to employ technology and also to “let it be,” to let it in and also leave it out.¹¹⁰

Heidegger acknowledges that technology and the entire technical framing of the modern world cannot now be put to one side; rather, the challenge is not to allow ourselves to be dominated and enslaved by it. If we adopt the right attitude,

[O]ur relation to technology will become wonderfully simple and relaxed (*einfach und ruhig*). We let (*Wir lassen . . . in . . .*) technical devices enter our daily life, and at the same time leave them outside (*lassen . . . draussen . . .*), that is leave them alone, as things which are nothing absolute but depend on something higher. I would call this comportment towards technology which expresses “yes” and at the same time “no,” by an old word, release-ment toward things.¹¹¹

This appearing and hiding of the essence of technology is something we can be open to and we can adopt an attitude which Heidegger calls “openness to the mystery” (*die Offenheit für das Geheimnis*, GA 16, 528). This combination of *Gelassenheit* and “openness to the mystery” is precisely what is supposed to give us a new rootedness, a new “*Grund und Bode*.” However, Heidegger says this kind of meditative thinking (*Nachdenken*, *Besinnung*) does not happen by itself and is no accident but requires “courage” so it seems to require a self-conscious act of willing. Yet it is precisely this which he challenges in his second essay.

The second text published in the 1959 *Gelassenheit* volume, which was written somewhat earlier (1944–45), was cast in the form of a dialogue between three people: a scientist/researcher (*Forscher*), a scholar

¹¹⁰ In the course of this essay, Heidegger plays on the multiple meanings of “letting” (*lassen*): including *verlassen* (forsaking, abandoning, leaving behind), *einlassen* (to let in, admit), *ablassen* (to let up, to stop), *fallenlassen* (to discard, leave to one side), *sich einlassen auf* (to engage in), and so on. Indeed, in the “Worldhood of the World” chapter of *Being and Time*, Heidegger speaks of “*sein lasse*,” about letting something be discovered in its readiness to hand. See Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 17th edition (Tübingen: 1993), 84–85; trans. John Macquarrie and E. Robinson, *Being and Time* (New York: 1962), 117.

¹¹¹ Heidegger, *Gelassenheit*, 23; *Discourse on Thinking*, 54; GA 16, 527.

(*Gelehrter*), and a teacher (*Lehrer*) and is translated as “Conversation on a Country Path About Thinking.”¹¹² Here Heidegger develops the theme of *Gelassenheit* in a more systematic and technical manner and, this time, Meister Eckhart is explicitly mentioned as one of the old “masters of thought” (*bei älteren Meistern des Denkens*) “from whom much can be learned.”¹¹³

Heidegger here develops a much deeper account of the nature of *Gelassenheit* or letting be. He is reflecting on the relation between thinking and willing (which Kant characterized as “spontaneity”). Heidegger here rejects the religious interpretation of *Gelassenheit* as a letting go or abandoning of the human will in order to let the divine will prevail. In this context, Heidegger thinks Eckhart himself errs on the religious side, replacing human will with divine will. He quotes Eckhart’s *Talks of Instruction* (*Counsels of Discernment*): “Where I will nothing for myself, there instead wills God” (GA 77, 158). Rather, Heidegger seeks to articulate a new kind of non-willing, meditative response that is not fundamentally based on *questioning* but rather on a kind of “answering” (*Antworten*), which may also be understood as a kind of thanking. Questioning is a will to a response, for Heidegger, whereas what is needed is a kind of response that answers to the “claim” (*Anspruch*) of Being: “The word must first be listened to” (GA 77, 25).

According to Heidegger (and here the influence on Gadamer can clearly be seen), a genuine conversation does not attempt *to will* something (i.e. its outcome or result). Conversation has to involve a receptivity and openness to the matter at hand. Heidegger’s *Gelassenheit* does not involve letting oneself go in order to invite God in. Rather, for Heidegger, *Gelassenheit* is entirely outside the domain of the will; it is neither passive nor active. Possibly influenced by Schopenhauer, Heidegger proposes *Gelassenheit* as a kind of “non-willing” (*Nicht-Wollen*) but is careful, especially in the longer unpublished version of the conversation, to distinguish this non-willing from any kind of “self-refusal” (*Sich-Weigern*) or “self-opposition” (*Sich-Widersetzen*) or “forbidding” (*Verbieten*). According to Heidegger, to explicitly renounce willing is still to will. In this lecture, especially, Heidegger understands representationalist thinking, thinking which sees to understand something in a particular manner, subject to a particular

¹¹² Heidegger, *Gelassenheit*, 27; *Discourse on Thinking*, 58–90.

¹¹³ Heidegger, *Gelassenheit*, 34; *Discourse on Thinking*, 61.

framework or context, as a kind of willing. Technological thinking, then, is an extreme form of wilfulness.

In the *Gelassenheit* lecture, in order to characterize the new kind of opening within which genuine as opposed to representational thinking takes place, Heidegger introduces two new concepts, namely, the notions of “horizon” (*Horizont*), taken from Husserl, and “region” (and here Heidegger uses both “*die Gegend*” as well as an older dialect term “*die Gegnet*”) which he understands as a certain kind of open space, but presumably not an imposed context. For Heidegger, a region is “an expanse and an abiding” (*die Weite und die Weile*).¹¹⁴ It seems to have the character of both gathering and opening “so that its openness is gathered and held.” The open expanse (*Weite*) is also a kind of “abiding” or “whiling” away. In other words, the concept of an opening here does not just have a spatial meaning—it also has a temporal connotation. A kind of temporal space is necessary for a genuine conversation.

For Heidegger, thinking is the activity of opening or regioning, where such opening is simply allowing the space of meaning to manifest itself as opposed to imposing a grid on it. Furthermore, “releasement” into the open is a matter of waiting (*Warten*). As Heidegger writes:

Releasement (*Gelassenheit*) is indeed the release of oneself from transcendental representation and so the relinquishing (*Absehen*) of a willing of the horizon. Such relinquishing no longer stems from a willing, except that the occasion for releasing oneself to belonging to the open-region would require a trace of willing (*Spur des Wollens*). This trace, however, vanishes while releasing oneself and is completely extinguished in releasement.¹¹⁵

Part of Heidegger’s concern is to establish a kind of thinking about being which is haunted neither by metaphysics nor theology. It cannot be representational thinking. Furthermore, *Gelassenheit* should not be determined by the structure of Christian expectation, faith, and hope. The experience of *transcendence* of which he is talking here is still very much understood as phenomenology, as the experience of manifestation. Heidegger is exploring the manner in which truth is made manifest by humans, how humans stand in the truth. That-which-regions is itself truth, and the true human relation to such truth is *thinking* in the sense of allowing something to manifest itself.

¹¹⁴ Heidegger, *Gelassenheit*, 40; *Discourse on Thinking*, 66.

¹¹⁵ Heidegger, *Gelassenheit*, 57–58; *Discourse on Thinking*, 79–80.

The problem is whether, in these texts, *Gelassenheit*, for Heidegger, signals a kind of *quietism*, doing nothing, a retreat from action. Eckhart in his own *Talks of Instruction* directly addresses the issue of action and quietism. He argues there that persons who are too concerned about acting become attached to the action which is something temporary, whereas nothing is permanently in one's possession, so it is important to be detached from such doing.

Heidegger ends his meditation by invoking a single Greek word from Heraclitus, which he translates as "going near" (*Nahegehen*) or "moving-into-nearness" (*In-die-Nähe-gehen*).¹¹⁶ This suggests a kind of activity, a kind of alertness which has at the same time to inhibit becoming representation.

Clearly, in these extremely dense texts, Heidegger is attempting not just to comment on Eckhart in the sense of offering an interpretation, but rather to free up the true sense of Eckhart's *Gelassenheit* so that it can be a form of remedial thinking in relation to the thinking of Being and living out the human activity of manifesting truth. Heidegger is not offering exegesis; he is rather wresting the concept of *Gelassenheit* from its Christian context in Eckhart and allowing it to have a deeper and more ontological significance. This represents a very profound and creative reading (even misreading) of Eckhart, which dislocates it from its historical and conceptual content. It can be argued, for instance, that Heidegger imposes on Eckhart's sense of *Gelassenheit* the Christian concept of *resignatio*, resignation to the will of God, rather than reading it as a more radical breaking free of all representations and images both of the divine and of worldly things.

ECKHART'S TREATISE "ON DETACHMENT" IN RELATION TO HEIDEGGER

In order to contextualize Heidegger's approach and understand its relation to Eckhart, we need to look more closely at Eckhart's treatise *On Detachment* (*Von Abgeschiedenheit*, Middle High German: *Von Abgescheidenheit*).¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Heidegger, *Gelassenheit*, 70; *Discourse on Thinking*, 89.

¹¹⁷ DW V, 400–35, translated as "On Detachment" in *Meister Eckhart. The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatise and Defense*, ed. Colledge and McGinn, 285–94, and in Walshe, vol. 3, 117–29. Its authenticity was challenged by Adolf Spamer in his careful critique of Pfeiffer's edition; see A. Spamer, *Zur Überlieferung der Pfeiffer'schen Eckehart-texte. Ein Versuch. Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 34 (1909), 307–420, but it was included by Quint in DW V.

This is a complex but unified tractate on the virtue of detachment.¹¹⁸ Its date is uncertain.¹¹⁹ The treatise begins with Eckhart attesting that he has read the pagan masters, the Old Testament prophets, the New Testament, and has sought himself to discover the highest virtue for human beings. According to Eckhart, detachment is the most elevated of the human virtues (surpassing even love, humility, and compassion) as, through it, humans lose their connection with creaturehood. Detachment attains to the unity and purity of God himself. Detachment affords humans perfect knowledge and will as the divine knowledge and will take effect in them. The object of this detachment is pure nothingness. Detachment places God above all good works; all the good works in the world have no effect on God's detachment.¹²⁰

Elsewhere, in his Sermon 53 *Misit dominus manum suam*, Eckhart confirms that detachment was one of his central themes:

When I preach, I am accustomed to speak about detachment, and that a man should be free of himself and of all things; second, that a man should be formed again into that simple good which is God; third, that he should reflect on the great nobility with which God has endowed his soul, so that in this way he may come to wonder at God; fourth, about the purity of the divine nature, for the brightness of the divine nature is beyond words. (Sermon 53: *Misit dominus manum suam*).¹²¹

This list of themes has rightly been recognized by Reiner Schürmann and others as a summary of Eckhart's teaching.¹²² The four themes are "detachment" (*Abgeschiedenheit*), "being transformed" (*Wiedereingebildet*) into God, the "nobility" (*Adel*) of the soul, and the "simplicity" (*Lauterkeit*) of God. Eckhart places detachment in first position. Indeed, Eckhart interprets Christ's injunction to Martha, "One thing is necessary" (*unum est necessarium*, Luke 10:42), as meaning "whoever wants to be free of care and to be pure must have one thing, and that is detachment."¹²³ Richard Woods also highlights Eckhart's other main teachings including the spark

¹¹⁸ For a recent discussion of the structure of the treatise see Markus Enders, "Une interpretation du traité eckhartien du détachement," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 70, 1 (1996), 7–17.

¹¹⁹ See Frank Tobin, *Meister Eckhart: Thought and Language* (Philadelphia: 1986), 20.

¹²⁰ "On detachment," in Colledge and McGinn, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, 288.

¹²¹ DW III, 437–48; Colledge and McGinn, *Meister Eckhart. The Essential Sermons*, 203.

¹²² See for example Richard Woods, *Eckhart's Way* (London: 1987), 41.

¹²³ Eckhart, "On detachment," in Colledge and McGinn, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, 285.

of the soul, the nothingness of God and of the creature, and the birth of the Word in the soul.¹²⁴

Eckhart places a unique emphasis on the notion of “breakthrough” (*Durchbruch*), a concept also invoked by Heidegger, and indeed which is echoed in Husserl’s claim about the role of the *Logical Investigations* in effecting a “breakthrough” in his thinking. In his Sermon 52, *Beati pauperes spiritu*, Eckhart says:

a great authority says that his breaking through (*durchbrechen*) is nobler than his flowing out (*üszvliezen*); and this is true.¹²⁵

This breakthrough is a break-out from all that is temporal and conditioned. By abandoning the created and the temporal, we return to the eternal, but since the eternal is itself the changeless:

But in the breaking through, when I come to be free of will of myself and of God’s will and of all his works and of God himself, then I am above all created things, and I am neither God nor creature, but I am what I was and what I shall remain, now and eternally.¹²⁶

Heidegger’s provocative reading of Eckhart absorbs him into Heidegger’s own project of thinking of Being independently of beings. Heidegger’s selective highlighting and interpretative rendering of Eckhartian themes has been hugely influential in lifting Eckhart out of purely medieval thought and presenting him as a still vital voice of our age.

ECKHART AS A CRITIC OF ONTOTHEOLOGY: THE POSTMODERN RECEPTION

Another important theme introduced by Heidegger which has had an enormous bearing on Eckhart studies is Heidegger’s critique of *ontotheology*. Heidegger is largely responsible for identifying, naming, and criticizing the ontotheological tendency of modern philosophy and theology. This has been interpreted as a challenge to neo-Thomistic conceptions of being (found in Maritain, Gilson, and others).¹²⁷ In this context, Eckhart

¹²⁴ Richard Woods, *Eckhart’s Way*, 42.

¹²⁵ DW II, 486–506. Colledge and McGinn, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, 203.

¹²⁶ DW II, 486–506. Colledge and McGinn, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, 203.

¹²⁷ See Etienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto: 1952), and John F. X. Knasas, *Being and Some Twentieth-Century Thomists* (New York: 2003). The term “ontotheology” is to be found in Kant, but Heidegger applies it to the whole metaphysical tradition that treats of God as a being albeit an infinite being.

has been championed by post-Heideggerian critics of ontotheology, such as Alain de Libera, Emilie zum Brunn, John D. Caputo, among many others.¹²⁸ A number of studies produced by a group of CNRS researchers in Paris argued strongly for Eckhart's radical stance against the prevailing identification of God with being. Thus, in their Preface to the first French translation of Eckhart's *Parisian Questions*, *Maître Eckhart à Paris. Une critique médiévale de l'ontothéologie*, the authors claim boldly that, already in his first Paris sojourn of 1302/1303, and six centuries before Heidegger, Eckhart had established the basic principle of all his subsequent philosophy, namely, that God is not Being but intellect. This is presented as a critique of ontotheology.

The French deconstructionist Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), too, has discussed Meister Eckhart in several places and has cautioned against his own concept of *différance* being understood in terms of Eckhart's negative theology. Derrida discusses Eckhart's *Gelassenheit* (and Angelus Silesius) in his "Postscriptum: Aporias, Ways and Voices."¹²⁹ He refers to the manner in which Angelus Silesius takes up the themes of *Gelassenheit* and the "*ohne Warum*" (without the why). The essay is a meditation on the kind of assertion or non-assertion involved in the *apophasis* of negative theology and whether in fact it is an atheism. Derrida wants to stress the ambiguity involved in negative theology but his discussion is hardly either incisive or innovative. The American postmodern philosopher John D. Caputo (who has written extensively on Eckhart and who acknowledges the influence of Derrida) has commented illuminatingly on the relation between the strategies of Derrida and Eckhart.¹³⁰ Caputo claims that Eckhart employs certain deconstructive strategies aimed at loosening the grip of "ontotheology." For Caputo, interpreting Derrida, negative theologies are still caught up in asserting the ontotheological God which they claim to deny. In other words, negative theology still remains *theo-logy*, a speaking about God, even if that God is interpreted in a more transcendent manner.

¹²⁸ See especially E. Zum Brunn and A. de Libera, *Maître Eckhart. Métaphysique du Verbe et théologie négative* (Paris: 1984); and E. Zum Brunn, Z. Kaluza, A. de Libera, P. Vignaux, and E. Wéber, *Maître Eckhart à Paris. Une critique médiévale de l'ontothéologie. Les Questions parisiennes n° 1 et n° 2 d'Eckhart, études, textes et traductions*, (BEHE. Section des Sciences religieuses) 86 (Paris: 1984).

¹²⁹ Jacques Derrida, "Postscriptum: Aporias, Ways and Voices," trans. John P. Leavey, in Harold Coward and Toby Foshay, *Derrida and Negative Theology* (Albany, N.Y.: 1992). A slightly different version appeared as "Sauf le nom (Postscriptum)" in Jacques Derrida, *On the name*, ed. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford: 1995).

¹³⁰ See John D. Caputo, "Mysticism and Transgression: Derrida and Meister Eckhart," in *Derrida and Deconstruction*, ed. Hugh Silverman, *Continental Philosophy* 2 (1989), 24–39.

In this respect, Eckhart, too, remains within a kind of ontotheology; he can write both that God is *esse* while creatures are nothing and also that God is a “nothingness,” a “desert.” Caputo defends Eckhart against Derrida’s criticism of ontotheology by suggesting that this critique of ontotheology is already present in Eckhart. Eckhart, for Caputo, is supremely aware that language is caught up in a self-defeating enterprise. This failure of language for him has an ontological function to point to the inexpressible God beyond language. For Caputo, deconstruction is parasitic on hermeneutics and on an assertion which it then proceeds to qualify. To call God “Creator” is to mark him off from creatures, to call him “cause” is to mark him off from effects, and so on. Caputo believes that, to a certain extent, Eckhart is in the grip of a “Neoplatonic henological metaphysics;” nevertheless, he is also praying to God to rid him of God. Eckhart is not a proponent of the metaphysics of presence; rather, Caputo finds a certain “mystical dissemination,” “grammatological exuberance,” and “transgressive energy” in Eckhart’s tracts and sermons. Eckhart’s aim is to “prod the life of the spirit.” Caputo claims that Eckhart’s Neoplatonic henological negative theology actually masks a deconstructive challenging of assertion. Caputo concludes:

What Eckhart taught had little to do with a Neoplatonic One or a super-essential presence. Rather he taught with irrepressible exuberance the joyful wisdom of a life graced by God and in the process shattered with loving joy the most prized graven images of onto-theo-logic.¹³¹

In this tradition also one could situate the work of the Catholic postmodern thinker Jean-Luc Marion.

These bold, Heideggerian-inspired interpretations of Eckhart, as proponent of meditative thinking (capable of shedding light on our technological condition) and as a critic of ontotheology, dominated philosophical interpretations of Eckhart in the late 20th century. In a sense, Heidegger, in his typical style, pays little attention to the historical and intellectual context of Eckhart’s work, but, undoubtedly his reading takes Eckhart seriously as a “master thinker” in the full richness of Heidegger’s understanding of thinking (*Denken*). The 21st century will undoubtedly discover new “Eckharts” answering to the needs of the age and will undoubtedly refine further our understanding of the historical Eckhart.

¹³¹ See John D. Caputo, “Mysticism and Transgression: Derrida and Meister Eckhart,” in *Derrida and Deconstruction*, 39.

EPILOGUE: MEISTER ECKHART—BETWEEN MYSTICISM AND PHILOSOPHY

Karl Albert[†]

The principal theme of this Afterword to the three great themes of research into Eckhart that have been discussed above—the life and work of Meister Eckhart, Eckhart as “master of reading” (lector) and “master of life,” and Eckhart and his influence—is closely connected to the history of Eckhart research. After the publication of the papal bull of John XXII in 1329, little was heard of Eckhart; it was only in the period of German romanticism that there occurred something like a rediscovery of the great medieval theologian and preacher. After Franz Pfeiffer published an edition of Eckhart’s sermons in 1857, in addition to numerous other mystical texts from the Middle Ages, Germanists and theologians, above all those who belonged to the Protestant confession, began an intensive investigation of Eckhartian mysticism. This situation changed abruptly in 1886, when Heinrich Denifle published Latin sermons by Eckhart, since understandably, in view of their academic training, it was primarily Catholic theologians who regarded themselves as competent in this field. On the one hand, there was the mystic of the Germanists and the Protestant theologians—on the other, the philosopher of the Catholic theologians and the historians of philosophy. For many years, accordingly, there was an Eckhart divided into two: a German and a Latin Eckhart, with scarcely any link between them in the scholarly literature. Gradually, however, non-Catholic thinkers also began the task of interpreting the Eckhartian philosophy. Similarly, philosophers and historians of philosophy of the most varied provenance, including not a few Japanese scholars, studied the German sermons of the Eckhart who was understood as a mystic. In the great Stuttgart edition of the German and Latin works, which began in 1934, parallel passages in the edition of the texts in the other language are signaled again and again, with the result that the difference between the mystical and the philosophical Eckhart becomes ever less significant. This is our contemporary situation, in which I should like to comment on the problem of mysticism and philosophy in Meister Eckhart, looking both back—and ahead.

The proponents of an Eckhartian mysticism generally appealed to the numerous forms of the teaching about “the birth of God in the soul.” Since the age of romanticism, “mysticism” has been understood in general to mean a state of consciousness or of thought in which (to employ religious language) the separation between God and the soul is abolished, or (to express this in non-religious language) the separation between the ego and the universe is overcome. This, however, means that mysticism entails a mental or spiritual experience of unity, since everything that is present in the soul or in the ego occurs in such a way that it is known. It goes without saying that the assertion that one has had such an experience contradicts everyday consciousness, and hence also naive piety. Indeed, ultimately it also contradicts “orthodox” understandings of religion and therefore often provokes suspicion and opposition. This was inevitably the case with the mysticism of the birth of God in the soul.

But what is the origin of such mysticism, and how could it ever hope for acknowledgement on the part of the orthodox forms of Christian theology? Its background is the Christian theological doctrine of the Trinity in God, hinted at in the New Testament and subsequently more and more elaborated. The core of this Trinitarian doctrine is the teaching about the processions within the Godhead, with which the attempt was made to unite the doctrine of the three persons in God with the doctrine of the unity of God. This teaching affirms that God the Father, the first of the three divine persons, knows his own self. In this self-knowledge, he begets or gives birth to the Son as the second divine person. In that the Son loves the Father, the third person in God, the Holy Spirit, comes into existence. This procession within the Godhead is continued in the soul of the human being, so that the birth of God takes place in the human soul, too. This is why Eckhart can say in the sermon *Omne datum optimum*: “The Father gives birth to his Son in the eternal act of knowing, and the Father gives birth to his Son in the soul exactly as he does in his own nature, and he gives birth to him in such a way that he becomes the soul’s own.”¹ He writes perhaps even more boldly and uncompromisingly about the birth of the Son in the sermon *In hoc apparuit*: “As truly as the Father in his simple nature gives birth to his Son in a natural manner, so truly does he give birth to him in the innermost realm of the spirit, and this is

¹ DW I, 72, 8–10.

the internal world. Here, God's ground is my ground, and my ground is God's ground."² To grasp this does not involve feeling; Eckhart often spoke against forms of Christian piety that were especially interested in religious feelings. Rather, Eckhart seems to be striving only for forms of knowledge. One who wishes to speak of mystical experience in relation to Eckhart's German sermons and writings cannot understand this experience otherwise than as an intellectual experience based on Trinitarian theology. One can of course ask: if mysticism entails internal experience, is there any mysticism in Eckhart at all? Can the birth of God in the soul actually be experienced internally? There are theologians who dispute this. For example, the Jesuit Germanist Heribert Fischer writes, "The themes of the birth of God and other themes are *theologumena*, not mysticism."³ Udo Kern points in the same direction with his suggestion that we should "speak of theology in philosophical terms in Eckhart, based on the divine birth of the Son."⁴

2

Kurt Flasch, formerly professor of the history of philosophy at Bochum, goes even further. He sees Eckhart's teaching about the birth of God in the soul as neither mysticism nor theology, but as philosophy—though a philosophy which includes things otherwise assigned to the fields of mysticism and theology, thereby achieving a "philosophy of the birth of God in the soul," a "philosophy of Christianity," or a "philosophy of the Gospel."

Flasch has put a fundamental question mark against the classification of Eckhart as a mystic.⁵ This thesis, which is in fact somewhat sensational, seems to be prompted by two prologues by Eckhart. In the *Prologus in opus tripartitum*, Eckhart emphasizes that the basic thesis of his planned chef d'œuvre is the identity of Being with God, that is, the thesis *esse est deus*, and that with such a thesis, when it is rightly understood, it is easy to solve all (or at least almost all) the problems concerning God; likewise, the

² Pr. 5b (DW I, 90, 5–8).

³ H. Fischer, *Meister Eckhart. Einführung in sein philosophisches Denken* (Freiburg and Munich: 1974), 141.

⁴ "Eckharts Intention," in *Freiheit und Gelassenheit. Meister Eckhart heute*, ed. U. Kern (Munich: 1980), note 24.

⁵ Kurt Flasch, "Meister Eckhart—Versuch, ihn aus dem mystischen Strom zu retten," in *Gnosis und Mystik in der Geschichte der Philosophie*, ed. P. Koslowski (Zurich: 1988), 94–120.

scriptural words about God, and especially the obscure passages that are difficult to understand, can be clearly explained by the natural intellect.⁶ Eckhart also underlines in the Preface to his *Commentary on John* that his intention in the exposition of Jn 1:1, as in all his other writings, is “to expound according to the natural reasons of the philosophers that which the holy Christian faith and the scripture of both Testaments taught,” and he goes on to say explicitly that this intention applies especially to the doctrine of God the Son and the Holy Spirit.⁷

Flasch’s essay begins with a distinction and a comparison between two basic tendencies of Greek philosophy: on the one hand the argumentative thinking of the Athenian Plato, and the pure and silent act of contemplation of Being in Parmenides of Elea on the other. In the struggle between these two tendencies, it was the Platonic that won: “In his *Parmenides*, but above all in his *Sophist*, Plato has shown that the Eleatic philosophy, by leading one to fall silent, destroys itself as philosophy . . . The Socratic talkativeness thus won the victory over the sublime solemnity of the Eleatic act of falling silent.”⁸ Plato can indeed be understood differently, but Flasch sticks to his view of the Platonic philosophy as an “insight into the catastrophic political situation” in which philosophy must be useful—and philosophy could be useful only “by unmasking the appeal to the unutterable as an empty sublimity.”⁹ Plato’s politically oriented philosophy is thus the end of Eleatism. Thanks to a number of “productive misunderstandings,” however, Eleatism was taken up by Plotinus’ apolitical thinking, which became the basis of the philosophical mysticism of the Middle Ages: “The history of philosophical mysticism is the history of Plotinism.”¹⁰ Here, of course, Flasch seems momentarily to have forgotten that Eckhart, too, belongs to this tradition. Plotinus, at any rate, acknowledges mute ecstasy as the highest state.

Flasch writes that no objection need be made to the concept of mysticism per se, if all that is intended is a designation of specific “sorts of texts.” If, on the other hand, an interpreter wishes to characterize the essence of an individual’s thinking as “mystical,” proof is required. Here, Flasch becomes political. He writes that the interpretation of Eckhart as mystical will become downright grotesque if it continues to employ the

⁶ Prol. gener., n. 22, LW I, 165, 10–12.

⁷ In Joh., n. 2, LW III, 4, 4–9.

⁸ Flasch, “Meister Eckhart” (note 5 above), 95.

⁹ Ibid., 96.

¹⁰ Ibid.

irrationalistic vocabulary of the philosophy of life: expressions such as *experience*, *abyss*, *sinking down*, and *immediacy* are “demonstrably derivatives of the language of bourgeois education in the age of the destruction of reason.”¹¹ The mention of the subtitle of Lukács’s book indicates that Flasch tends towards Marxism, and this becomes clearer when he demands that relationships to real history be taken into account and accuses scholars of having sought the supratemporal wisdom of mysticism “rather than seeing in Eckhart the man who thought through and who accompanied the urban societal development. It seems that the sensitive admirers of Eckhart were disgusted by such a banal and nasty political way of looking at him.”¹² It is striking that Flasch is not far here from the interpretation of Eckhart by the Marxist Hermann Ley in communist East Germany, whose slight knowledge of these matters and whose ideologically determined false interpretations surely ought to have disqualified him once and for all as an authority on questions of medieval philosophy.¹³

3

Eckhart wanted to develop a pure philosophy, completely apolitical yet free of theology, in the first part of his *Opus tripartitum*, which was conceived as a synthesis of his life’s work. This first part, structured like the collections of theses in the Neoplatonic mold, was to consist of theses with accompanying commentaries. The model was Proclus’ *Stoicheiôsis theologikê*, which had been translated into Latin by William of Moerbeke in 1268 under the title *Elementatio theologica*.¹⁴ With something of a tendency to gigantism, Eckhart proposed to surpass his predecessors in this field with an *Opus propositionum* containing more than 1000 theses with their commentaries. This does not survive in its entirety. In the general Preface to his chef d’œuvre, Eckhart discusses the first thesis (mentioned

¹¹ Ibid., 106.

¹² Ibid., 108.

¹³ On this, see K. Albert, *Meister Eckharts These vom Sein. Untersuchungen zur Metaphysik des Opus tripartitum* (Kastellaun: 1976); now in *Meister Eckhart und die Philosophie des Mittelalters* (Dettelbach: 1999), 11–358.

¹⁴ I. Zurbrügg has recently published a German translation: *Proklos: Elemente der Theologie* (Remscheid: 2004). He has given additional explanations in his *Enchiridion-Handbuch. Zur Erläuterung, Kommentierung und Vertiefung der Übersetzung der Elemente der Theologie des Proklos* (Remscheid: 2005).

above), *esse est deus*, with the accompanying, purely rational, proofs.¹⁵ This first, metaphysical part forms the foundation of the two other parts; in his general Preface, Eckhart observes that they would be of little use without the first part. In the first *quaestio*, we have an example of the way he works on a problem in the second part of the *Opus tripartitum*, and the same is true of the third part, the work of expositions. Unfortunately, Eckhart was not able to continue either the work on the theses or the work on the problems in keeping with these examples that he gives; but the situation with the third part of the *Opus tripartitum* is completely different, since here we have a whole series of large-scale commentaries on individual books of the Bible and a volume of Latin sermons. In the various themes of the third part, the *Opus expositionum*, we hear very little of a mysticism of the birth of God in the soul (if indeed this involves mysticism at all). But Eckhart often quotes from passages of the first, metaphysical part, which obviously already existed in draft form. In my book on Eckhart, cited above, I have employed the precise list of contents of the first part, found in the general Preface, in order to get a rough idea of Eckhart's work on the theses.

A close examination shows that this first part does not at all correspond to the idea of a "philosophy of the Gospel" or a "philosophy of Christianity." The *Prologus generalis* shows that, with one possible exception, Eckhart's outline of the work on the theses deals only with themes of pure metaphysics or of metaphysical theology. The first four of the planned 14 treatises of the work concern the doctrine of transcendentals. They deal with Being, the one, the true, and the good. The next treatise develops Eckhart's teaching on analogy. The following six treatises concern a metaphysical theology (i.e. a teaching about God as Being); explanations concerning the ontotheological meaning of love and the theme of sin as the antithetical concept to the ontotheological concept of love; the especially frequently employed teaching about the graded ordering of what exists, between the higher and the lower; and the supratemporality of the divine Being. One last important point is a theological doctrine of the ideas and the teaching about the identity of Being and essence in God. We should not overlook the fact that Eckhart can also speak occasionally *de deo uno et trino* in connection with the metaphysical doctrine of God. However, Trinitarian doctrine appears only in connection with the teaching about

¹⁵ On this, see my interpretative presentation in *Meister Eckharts These vom Sein*, 36–49.

the birth of God in the soul. In other words, it is not interpreted metaphysically.¹⁶

Fortunately, the special Preface to the *Opus propositionum* has survived. Here, Eckhart speaks in detail of central substantial elements of his metaphysics, so that this text (to which, unfortunately, little attention has usually been paid) is the longest continuous text which gives us information about Eckhart's metaphysical thought. The essential point in this thought is the distinction between two kinds of Being (i.e. between pure absolute Being and the Being of the existent), its being this or that, or between the *esse* (the *esse purum et simplex*) on the one hand and the *esse hoc aut illud* on the other.

According to Eckhart's basic thesis *esse est deus*, pure or absolute Being is divine, identical to God. Unlike pure Being, the Being of things as such, their being this or that, is creaturely. Nevertheless, things have a twofold Being: *omnis creatura duplex habet esse*.¹⁷ Thus, a stone's "being a stone" is creaturely, but the mere Being of the stone is divine. This teaching brings Eckhart close to pantheism, and his accusers in the first trial in Cologne did in fact place the proposition *esse est deus* on the list of the affirmations to which objection was made. Eckhart's reply is that his *esse* does not mean the *esse formaliter inhaerens* (i.e. the concrete Being of things), but the *esse absolutum*, which must first of all be understood as the sole Being of God.¹⁸ Understandably, Eckhart does not mention the teaching about the twofold Being of the existent. His accusers were obviously satisfied by this explanation—as were a number of later Catholic interpreters of Eckhart.

4

In terms of its contents, the rationality of the metaphysical philosophy of the *Opus propositionum* was likewise far removed from every mysticism. Nevertheless, the *esse est deus* does have a mystical aspect, from the perspective of the act of knowing. This aspect is not taken into consideration in most interpretations of Eckhart, not least because the relevant statements by Eckhart are widely scattered and are found partly in the Latin writings, but partly also in the German texts.

¹⁶ On this, see In Gen. II, n. 179, LW I, 649, 5–8.

¹⁷ See In Gen. I, n. 77, LW I, 238, 2.

¹⁸ Proc. Col. I, n. 117.

Unlike the knowledge of the existent in its variety, the knowledge of pure Being is far removed not only from all everyday knowing, and especially from all the knowledge of the senses, but also from all the intellectual knowledge on which the work on the theses was based. The knowledge of absolute Being is a rational knowledge. If, however, this Being is God, knowledge of Being is at the same time knowledge of God. In this knowledge, God is not known in a rational manner, at a distance; God is not "opened up," so to speak. Rather, as in mysticism, the one who knows unites himself to that which is known. Eckhart expresses such a union in various ways, by means of particular images and metaphors. For example, we read in a Latin sermon: "The reason is nourished by Being alone, and thus it is nourished in the genuine sense by God."¹⁹ And in a German sermon: "The reason penetrates upward into Being... it sinks down into Being and grasps God, since he is pure Being."²⁰ Phrases such as the nourishment of the reason by God or the sinking down of the reason in God are intended to express the close link between God and the soul, a link which certainly seems to me to be close to mysticism—though this is a philosophical mysticism far removed from any possible mysticism of the birth of God in the soul.

I believe that a philosophically based mysticism of this kind is present where two conditions are met: first, a union of the one who knows with that which is known (i.e. what Neoplatonism and medieval mysticism call a *unio mystica*), and secondly, a religious fulfillment that is also present in this union, namely, the encounter with the Deity.

Not a few texts in Eckhart speak of the union between the reason and God. One impressive passage in a Latin sermon begins with the idea that God is essentially reason, and continues: "To ascend to the reason, to submit to it, is to be united with God. To be united, to be one, is to be one with God."²¹ A German sermon speaks of the closeness of this union. Here, Eckhart prefers to speak of a *scintilla* in the soul rather than of reason: "There is a power in the soul which removes that which is roughest and is united in God: this is the spark in the soul. (With it) my soul is united

¹⁹ Sermo LIV, 1 n. 528, LW IV, 445, 11: "Intellectus pascitur solo esse, et sic deo proprie pascitur."

²⁰ Pr. 37, DW II, 216: "Vernünfticheit dringet ûf in daz wesen... si versinket in daz wesen und nimet got, als er ist, lûter wesen."

²¹ Sermo XXIX, n. 304, LW IV, 270, 4–6: "Ascendere igitur ad intellectum, subdi ipsi, est uniri deo. Uniri, unum esse, est unum cum deo esse."

to God more closely than a food in my body.”²² This becoming one with God is religion in the deepest sense, if one follows Lactantius in deriving “religion”—in a manner that is etymologically false, but substantially correct—in deriving *religio* from the verb *religare*, “to bind again” (i.e. to God).

Religion, especially when understood in the sense of mystical piety, possesses an emphatically salvific character, even where God (as in Eckhart) is thought of as pure Being. This union is explained as follows in the *Commentary on John*: “The object of the reason is the naked existent, simply and absolutely . . . It is thus obvious that the naked substance of God, the fullness of Being, which is our blessedness, namely God, consists in, is found, accepted, touched, and drawn on in the reason.”²³ Or, as Eckhart puts it in one of his German sermons, using here the concept of the *scintilla animae* instead of the reason: “When the human person turns away from his own self and from all created things—to the extent that you do this, to that extent you will be united and made blessed in the spark of the soul, which neither time nor space ever touched.”²⁴ He then goes one step further: “This spark renounces all creatures and wants nothing else than God uncovered, as He is in himself . . . Indeed, I will say more than this, something that sounds even more astonishing: I say . . . that this light is not content with the simple, unmoving divine Being, which neither gives nor takes: it wants to know whence this Being comes; it wants to enter into the simple ground, into the silent wilderness into which difference never peeped, neither Father nor Son nor Holy Spirit; there, in the innermost sphere, where no one is at home, that light is content.”²⁵ In view of such texts, it is surely difficult to dispute the affirmation that Eckhart’s

²² Pr. 20a, DW I, 331, 9–11: “ein kraft ist in der sêle, diu spaltet abe daz gröbeste und wirt vereinet in got: daz ist das vünkelin der sêle. Noch einer wirt mîn sêle mit gote dan diu spise in mînem libe.”

²³ See In Joh., n. 677, LW III, 591, 6–11: “Obiectum autem intellectus est ens nudum, simpliciter et absolute . . . Patet ergo, quod nudam dei substantiam, plenitudinem esse, quae est nostra beatitudo, deus scilicet, consistit, invenitur, accipitur, attingitur et hauritur per intellectum.”

²⁴ See Pr. 48, LW II, 419, 1–3: “swenne sich der mensehe bekêret von im selben und von allen geschaffenen dingen,—als vil wirst dû geeiniget und gesâliget in dem vunken in der sêle, der zît noch stat nie enberuorte.”

²⁵ See ibid. 419, 3–42, 10: “Dirre vunkte widersaget allen krêatûren und enwil niht dan got blôz, als er in ihm selben ist . . . Ich will noch mêr sprechen, daz noch wunderlicher hillet: ich spriche ez bî guoter wârheit und bî der êwigen wârheit und bî iemmerwern-der wârheit, daz diesem selbe lieht niht engenüeget an dem einfaltigen stillteständen götlichen wesene, daz weder gibt noch nimet, mêr: ez wil wîzen, von wannen diz wesen her kome; es will in den einfaltigen grunt, in die stillen wüeste, dâ nie underscheit

intellectual thinking has the character of a philosophical experience of union between the soul and God, and thereby belongs in the sphere of philosophical mysticism.

Rudolf Otto, author of the epochal work *Das Heilige*, compared Eckhart's teaching in a later book with the classical Indian thinker Shankara and discerned in both a metaphysics based on the knowledge of Being. Otto remarks, however: "Both seek the knowledge of Being...but the knowledge of a Being that brings salvation."²⁶

5

It is rightly the task of research into the history of philosophy to answer the question whether Eckhart the theologian and Dominican friar must be understood more from the perspective of mysticism or from that of philosophy.²⁷

The first result of this research is that the mysticism of the birth of God in the soul, which was long regarded as the specific element of Eckhart's teaching, is not wholly undisputed, since some scholars have taken it for theology, others even, for philosophy. Secondly, no one will any longer dispute that the Eckhartian *Opus propositionum* is intended to be philosophy. Thirdly, and finally, it has not sufficiently been realized that there is in Eckhart, in the German works and in the Latin works, a philosophical mysticism according to which the reason ("vernünftlichkeit" or "intellectus") presses forward to a knowledge which discovers the identity of God and of Being. This is the contribution of the history of philosophy to the question of mysticism and philosophy in Meister Eckhart.

We must, however, add that this question is connected with the much broader problem of the essential reference of philosophy as such. We may recall how Nietzsche, in his early work *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen*, describes the proposition "Everything is one" as a metaphysical article of faith "which has its origin in a mystical intuition and which we encounter in all philosophies, together with ever renewed

ingeluogete weder vater noch sun noch heiliger geist; in dem innigsten, dâ nieman heime enist, dâ genüget es jenem liehte."

²⁶ On this, see R. Otto, *West-östliche Mystik*, 3rd ed. by G. Mensching (Munich: 1971), 20.

²⁷ On this, see the section "Theologie, Philosophie und Mystik," in the article by Niklaus Largier, "Meister Eckhart. Perspektiven der Forschung, 1980–1993," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 114 (1995), 29–98, see 52–64; and Largier, "Theologie, Philosophie und Mystik bei Meister Eckhart," *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 26 (1998), 704–11.

attempts to express it better.”²⁸ And, at a later date, in notes made at the time he was writing down the *Zarathustra*, he continues to assert: “The real goal of all philosophizing is the *intuitio mystica*.”²⁹ It is not, however, only the beginning and the end of philosophy that lie close to mysticism; rather, as the quotations from Nietzsche hint, this proximity is found again and again throughout the long history of philosophy.³⁰ Similarly, the Austrian philosopher Günther Pöltner writes about the title “Mystik und Philosophie” [“mysticism and philosophy”] that “the ‘and’ in this pair of nouns stands not for an external juxtaposition, but for an essential relatedness... which not merely encompasses Western mysticism, but also embraces the mystical traditions of Indian and Chinese thought.”³¹

²⁸ KSA 1, 813.

²⁹ KSA 11, 232.

³⁰ On this, see Karl Albert, *Mystik und Philosophie* (Sankt Augustin: 1986); Albert, *Einführung in die philosophische Mystik* (Darmstadt: 1996).

³¹ “Vorwort,” in *Leben für die Philosophie—Leben in der Philosophie*, ed. E. Jain and S. Grätzel (Freiburg: 2006), 7 [English translation: Brian McNeil].

APPENDIX

DOMINICAN EDUCATION

Walter Senner OP

The Order of Friars Preachers developed a system of scholastic studies for all friars who should become priests. The development of this organization was a complex process. Its foundation was laid by the earliest constitutions in 1221. Its unfolding was based on the order of studies (*Ratio studiorum*) elaborated in 1259 by a commission comprising Albert the Great, Bonushomo Brito (Mag. Paris c. 1253–55), Florentius de Hisdino (Mag. Paris 1255–57), Petrus de Tarentasia (Mag. Paris 1258–60, subsequently Pope Innocent V), and Thomas Aquinas.¹ From then onwards the rules of the annual general chapters allow us to reconstruct both the time limits for the curriculum of studies and the subjects that needed to be studied. Usually, the competent chapter assigned tasks to lectors and to priories in a province. The curriculum as well as the places of studies—usually a specific place for each part of the curriculum by (one or more) *natio*—changed from time to time.² The situation in Germany in the last decades of 13th century is known, however fragmentarily, both by the promulgations of the general chapters and by some insights from surviving documents. Yet many details remain uncertain.³

¹ Michèle M. Mulchahey, “First the bow is bent in study . . .” *Dominican Education Before 1350*, (Studies and texts) 132 (Toronto: 1998), 222ff., 232–36; William A. Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, vol. 2 (New York: 1966–73), 7ff.; Angelus Walz, *Compendium historiae Ordinis Praedicatorum* (Rome: 1949), 211. For the ordination see *Acta Capitulum Generalium*, vol. 2, ed. Benedict M. Reichert (ACG hereafter), Monumenta Ordinis Praedicatorum Historica 3 (Rome: 1898), 7ff. This appendix has been detached from Chapter One.

² First researched for the province of Toulouse, where we still have most of the acts of provincial chapters, by Célestin Douais, *Essai sur l'organisation des études dans l'Ordre des frères prêcheurs au 13^e et au 14^e siècle (1216–1342)* (Paris: 1884). The best general overview is provided by Mulchahey (note 1 above), especially 220–78. For Germany, where the *nationes* were the subdivision of the large province Teutonia and later from 1303 onwards Saxonia as well, see: Walter Senner, *Johannes von Sterngassen OP und sein Sentenzenkommentar*, vol. 1, (Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens) 4 (Berlin: 1995), 124–44.

³ See Isnard Frank, “Zur Studienorganisation der Dominikanerprovinz Teutonia in der ersten Hälfte des 14. Jahrhunderts und zum Studiengang des Seligen Heinrich Seuse OP,” in

Whoever wants to join a religious order first has to complete a period of probation, the noviciate, during which the novice is introduced to life in the order, the constitutions, community prayer, and singing. In 1254 Pope Alexander IV decreed one year as the duration of noviciate time for all orders.⁴ When in the course of the 13th century more and more young boys joined the Friars Preachers (unlike in the beginning when university students were the main entrants), the age of 18 years that was originally required was lowered to 15 in 1265.⁵ The threats of sanctions for receiving younger candidates showed that this was not always respected.⁶ And so, a prolonged introduction to prayer and religious life⁷ and lessons in Latin grammar and elementary logic were required. For this, the general chapter in 1305 prescribed two years to be served in the priory where such teenagers had been received.⁸

After initial hesitations concerning philosophy in the Dominican curriculum, the subject was fully integrated into the course of studies during the second half of the 13th century, largely due to the work of Albert the Great.⁹ In 1271, due to the fact that philosophy had become the preference of many students, the general chapter demanded more attention to

Heinrich Seuse: *Studien zum 600. Todestag 1366–1966*, ed. Ephrem M. Filthaut (Köln: 1966), 39–70; Senner, *Johannes* (note 2), vol. 1, 124–44.

⁴ *Bullarium Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum*, sub auspiciis Benedicti XIII P.M. opera Thomae Ripoll, vol. 1, ed. Antonius Bremond (Rome: 1729), 305.

⁵ “Nullus recipiatur infra octodecim annos,” in *Constitutiones antiquae Ordinis Praedicatorum*, ed. Antonin H. Thomas, *De oudste constituties van de Dominicanen*, Bibliothèque de la Revue d'histoire Ecclésiastique 42 (Leuven: 1965) (from here onwards: *Const. ant.*), d. 1, c. 14: 325.23; *ACG* (note 1), 1, 129.19ff. In exceptional cases the conventual prior could admit even younger candidates.

⁶ As noted by the general chapters in 1272: *ACG* (note 1), 1, 164.12–18; and in 1283: *ACG* (note 1), 1, 223.13–24. Walz: *Compendium* (note 1), 114, gives some examples of even younger boys received.

⁷ 1283: “Admonemus . . . quod priores circa instructionem et informacionem fratrum iuvenum, eciam post ipsorum professionem, diligentem curam adhibeant, nec eos exponant discursibus, nec ad artes addiscendas eos exponant, nisi prius in divino officio instructi fuerint et in religione et in observanciis regularibus informati.” *ACG* (note 1), 223.8–12. Already in the constitutions, *Const. ant.* (note 5), d. 1, c. 15: 236.15ff., it had been demanded that the friars should know much of the office by heart. See Humbertus de Romanis, *De officiis ordinis*, c. 5; Romanis, *Opera de vita regulari*, vol. 2, ed. Joachim J. Berthier (Rome: 1889; repr. Turin: 1956), 216ff.

⁸ “Nullus ad studium logicale mittatur, nisi saltem in ordine bene et religiose duobus annis fuerit conversatus vel alias in seculo fuerit etate proventus et in logicalibus instructus.” *ACG* (note 1), 2, 12.29–32. This seems to have been less a special course of study than a time of maturation in religious life; from the wording it is not clear whether that would be at least two years after noviciate or with the noviciate included.

⁹ See Senner, *Johannes* (note 2), 1, 107–13.

theology.¹⁰ The first part of study proper was called *studium artium* in Germany until the end of 13th century.¹¹ The study of philosophy was divided into two sections: *studium Logicalium*: “old” and “new” logic, according to Aristotle’s *Categoriae*, and *Peri hermeneias* as well as Porphyry’s *Isagoge* for the *logica vetus*, and *Analytica* 1 and 2, *Topica*, and *Elenchi Sophistici* for the *ars nova*—just as in the universities.¹² In view of the diverging practices in different provinces¹³—concerning Teutonia we do not have precise information—it can be inferred from a prescription of the general chapter in 1305, concerning the qualification of lectors, that the *Studium logicalium* at that time comprised three years. Two of these were devoted to the *logica nova*.¹⁴ Earlier it may have been limited to two years.

The next period was devoted to the *studium naturalium*, also called *philosophia realis* or *studium naturarum*.¹⁵ It comprised *Physica*, *Geometria* (following Euclid), *De caelo*, *De animalibus* (perhaps including some of the *Parva naturalia* in certain places and at certain times), *De anima* (psychology), and *Metaphysica*.¹⁶ A special part for *philosophia moralis*—*Ethica* (*Nicomachea*), *Economia*, *Politica*—does not appear in the sources; most likely it was included in the *studium naturalium*.¹⁷ Again, the set

¹⁰ “Monemus studentes, quod studio philosophie minus intendant et in studio theologie se exercent diligenter.” *ACG* (note 1), 1, 159.33ff. Repeated in 1274: *ACG*, 1, 174.23–26; after this the *ordo studiorum* of 1259 is repeated: *ACG*, 1, 175.1–176.6; see above, note 1.

¹¹ By a fragment of the acts of the Teutonia provincial chapter—presumably from 1284—we learn that there was a *studium artium* in each *natio*, in Basel, Worms, Würzburg, Regensburg, Leipzig, [Neu-]Ruppin, and Halberstadt. A lector and six to eight students were assigned to each of these, see Heinrich Finke, “Zur Geschichte der deutschen Dominikaner im XIII. und XIV. Jahrhundert,” *Römische Quartalschrift* 8 (1894), 367–91, especially 376. Isnard Frank, “Zur Studienorganisation” (note 2), 54, concludes from a document for a donation that in 1290 there was a *studium artium* at Esslingen (Württemberg). In 1294 the provincial Hermannus de Minda moves a *studium artium* from Colmar to Zürich because of war in Alsace: Heinrich Finke, *Ungedruckte Dominikanerbriefe* (Paderborn: 1891), 160, no. 150.

¹² See Frank, “Zur Studienorganisation” (note 3), 52–56; Senner: *Johannes* (note 2), 1, 113ff.; Mulchahey (note 1), 236–52, oriented to the situation in Provence and Italy. For the university curriculum, see Fernand Van Steenberge, *La philosophie au 13^e siècle*, (Louvain: 1991), 53ff.

¹³ Mulchahey (note 01), 236–52.

¹⁴ *ACG* (note 1), 2, 12, 7–10; see Isnard W. Frank, *Hausstudium und Universitätsstudium der Wiener Dominikaner bis 1500*, (Archiv für Österreichische Geschichte) 127 (Vienna: 1968), 158.

¹⁵ See Frank, “Zur Studienorganisation” (note 3), 55; Senner, *Johannes* (note 2), 1, 114–16; Mulchahey (note 1), 252–77.

¹⁶ See Frank (note 03), 56; Senner, *Johannes* (note 02) 1, 114–16; Mulchahey (note 1), 270–74.

¹⁷ See Frank (note 3), 56; Senner, *Johannes* (note 2), 1, 115; Mulchahey (note 1), 270–74.

books were the respective works of Aristotle (for *Geometria*, Euclid), supplemented by Albert the Great's and Thomas Aquinas's commentaries. Albert the Great, Dietrich of Freiberg, and Meister Eckhart, and perhaps somewhat later Johannes de Sterngassen, showed a good knowledge of Averroës, which makes one think that his commentaries were used in the German studia as well.¹⁸ It is clear that in 1305 the period for the *studium naturalium* was two years.¹⁹ For such a wide range of themes and set books this was a very short time; therefore, there were attempts to present it as a comprehensive philosophical encyclopedia. In Germany around 1315–20, Nicholas of Strasbourg composed a *Summa philosophiae* in which he treated the whole *philosophia naturalis* and ethics according to the four causes: Book 1 *causa efficiens*, 2 *causa materialis*, 3 *causa formalis*, 4 *causa finalis* (not preserved or even ever written).²⁰ By this period, Meister Eckhart was a mature scholar and administrator.

After this four to five year course of philosophy, the most gifted students were chosen to teach logic themselves for at least one cycle of two to three years.²¹ The others directly went on to the study of theology; those who had taught logic joined them later. The issue of what constituted the basic subject matter of theological studies (i.e. the studies for all friars preparing for priesthood) in the course of the 13th century has been a very controversial question—and it remains a controversial matter.²² For the last decades of the 13th century, together with the Bible, Peter Lom-

¹⁸ Kurt Flasch, *Meister Eckhart: die Geburt der "Deutschen Mystik" aus dem Geist der arabischen Philosophie* (Munich: 2006), passim, esp. 112–21; a precise overview will hopefully be available in the second volume of *Studi sulle fonti di Meister Eckhart*, vol. 1, ed. Loris Sturlese (Fribourg: 2008). For Theodoricus de Vribergo, see Kurt Flasch, *Dietrich von Freiberg: Philosophie, Theologie, Naturforschung um 1300* (Munich: 2007), passim, for a resumé see 692ff. For Johannes de Sterngassen, see Senner, *Johannes* (note 2), 1, 348–58.

¹⁹ ACG (note 1), 1, 12, 9 and 13.2ff.; see below note 21.

²⁰ The first volume has recently been edited with an instructive introduction by Loris Sturlese: Nikolaus von Straßburg, *Summa: Liber. 2*, tr. 1–2, ed. Gianfranco Pellegrini, *Corpus philosophorum Teutonicorum medii aevi* 5, 2.1 (Hamburg: 2009). See the still useful study by Ruedi Imbach and Ulrika Lindblad, "Compilatio rudis et puerilis: Hinweise und Materialien zu Nikolaus von Straßburg OP und seiner Summa," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 32 (1985), 155–233—see 198–200 ed. of Nicholas's prologue.

²¹ "ordinamus quod nullus ad legendum logicalia mittatur, nisi prius audierit logicam novam duobus annis, naturalia vero duobus, et per lectorem principalem et lectorem naturalium fuerit approbatus". ACG (note 01), 2, 12.8–10.

²² The groundbreaking study on this is: Leonard E. Boyle, "Notes on the education of the Fratres communes in the Dominican Order in the 13th century," *Xenia medii aevi historiam illustrantia oblata Thomae Kaeppeli OP*, vol. 1, ed. Raymond Creytens Storia e letteratura 141 (Rome: 1978), 249–67; for an overview see Mulchahey (note 1), 184–218 and 306–31; later 14th century developments are not relevant in this context.

bard's *Sententiae in quatuor libris distinctae* seem to have been the main text for the theological course.²³ In 1290 we find an order by the general chapter that—besides the study of the Bible in the *studia generalia* in public schools, which is also open to non-Dominicans—the Bible should be taught to at least a “cursory” level:²⁴ by way of glosses as short explanation, as the *baccalaureus biblicus* did at the University of Paris. The course on the *Sentences*, however, should not be omitted. Only in 1308 do we find a lamentation “that the study of the Bible seems to be neglected by many.”²⁵ Consequently, the general chapter of the following year decided that in each province a *studium biblie legendum biblice* had to be installed in at least two places.²⁶ The most excellent students were chosen to teach *philosophia naturalis* after they had studied theology, if possible after having already taught the *Sentences* at a *studium particulare* themselves.²⁷

The important role of the *magister studentium* was to look after the discipline of the students in all the different sorts of *studia*. Already in the first constitutions we find him vested with the power to give permission to hear lectures and write *quaternuli*—study notes.²⁸ Humbert of Romans gives a detailed description of this office comprising the duty of caring for the needs of the students.²⁹ It also had to deal with providing preachers for the students, either from the friars of the priory or transient prelates, masters or notable friars, Dominicans as well as Franciscans.³⁰ The master

²³ See Senner, *Johannes* (note 2), 1, 116–19; Mulchahey (note 1), 136.

²⁴ “Si autem in scholis publice non legatur <Biblia>, quilibet doctor in theologia legat semper cursorie aliquid de textu, lectione dumtaxat de sentenciis non obmissa.” *ACG* (note 1), 1, 257.7–9. See Senner, *Johannes* (note 2), 1, 117.

²⁵ *ACG* (note 1), 2, 34.18ff.

²⁶ *ACG* (note 1), 2, 38.18–22; Mulchahey (note 1), 280, agrees that until the 14th century we do not hear of a special *studium biblie*. *Biblice legendum* means the in-depth explanation as we have it in the Bible commentaries by Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas, which is different from the *cursory* treatment.

²⁷ “Ad legendum vero naturalia nullus mittatur, nisi legerit sentencias, ubi commode poterit observari, vel saltem sentencias duobus annis audierit, et in questionum responsionibus et obiectionibus testimonio principalis lectoris, cursoris, ubi cursor fuerit, et magistri studencium ad hoc fuerit iudicatus sufficiens.” *ACG* (note 1), 2, 12.10–15.

²⁸ “Quoniam circa studentes diligens est adhibenda cautela, aliquem fratrem specialem habeant, sine cuius licentia non scribant quaternos nec audeant lectiones. Et que circa eos in studio corrigenda viderit, corrigat et, si vires excedant, prelato proponat.” *Const. ant.* (note 5), d. 2, c. 28: 361.1–5.

²⁹ *De officiis ordinis* (note 7), 256ff. and 262ff.; Mulchahey (note 1), 170–74.

³⁰ *De officiis ordinis* (note 7), 257–59; Mulchahey (note 1), 189ff.

of students had to organize *collationes*.³¹ The *disputationes* among the students were also convened and directed by him.³² Humbert precisely articulates the disciplinary powers of the *magister studentium*, which went as far as fixing the timetable for lectures.³³ He had an important say together with the prior and the lector in judging the progress of the individual students and helped to decide who should be sent on for further qualification.³⁴ The general chapter of 1315 entrusted the *magistri studentium* with authority over the regularity of lectures and disputations and orthodoxy of the lectors³⁵—especially to make sure that they were following the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas.³⁶ For the *studia generalia* the general chapter of 1303 ordered that the *magister studentium* had to come from the province where the *studium* was situated for one year, and from another province for the subsequent year.³⁷ We find nothing in the available sources at this time concerning the required qualification for this office. Later on, it is usual for the lector to become *magister studentium* intermittently during his career. In the *studia generalia* a *baccalaureus*, after finishing this office, served in that capacity for another year³⁸—which perhaps may have been valid for Meister Eckhart's time as well.

³¹ Here *collatio* means an internal meeting of the student friars, to be distinguished from other forms. *De officiis ordinis* (note 07), 258; see Walter Senner: "Die 'Rede der unterscheidung' als Dokument dominikanischer Spiritualität," *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt*, ed. Andreas Speer and Lydia Wegener, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 32 (Berlin: 2005), 109–21, see 111–13.

³² *De officiis ordinis* (note 7), 260ff. On the controversial question as to who was entitled to hold disputations and their frequency, see Mulchahey (note 1), 172–75. I hold that, parallel to the installation of full scholastic *studia sollemnia*, the distinction between internal disputations for exercising the Dominican students and solemn public disputations, finally reserved for the *lector principalis* of a *studium generale*, emerged.

³³ *De officiis ordinis* (note 7), 261ff.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 262ff.

³⁵ "Magister studencium observabit et referet magistro ordinis in studiis generalibus et provinciali et diffinitoribus in aliis studiis, quid, quantum et quomodo lectores legent et in anno quociens disputabunt. Insuper si docuerint contra communem doctrinam Thome aut contra communes opiniones ecclesie, tangentes articulos fidei, bonos mores vel ecclesie sacramenta, aut si contra ista aut aliquid istorum adduxerint rationes, quas dimiserint insolutas, Super quibus eos primo cum debita reverencia admonebit; quod si se non correxerint debite revocando, provinciali vel eius vicario referat verbo vel scripto, si magister ordinis non fuerit in propinquo; qui si invenerit ita esse, eos absolvat ab officio lectionum." *ACG* (note 1), 2, 81.10–20. In our context it is interesting that we have no trace of such a denunciation made against Meister Eckhart—his accusers were not *magistri studentium*.

³⁶ "Advertat eciam magister studencium, si aliquid contra doctrinam Thome aut errorem vel suspectum seu errori propinquum invenerit in scriptis vel reportacionibus quibuscumque." *ACG* (note 1), 2, 81.21ff.; see l. 13.

³⁷ *ACG* (note 1), 1, 324.4–17; restated in 1305: *ACG* (note 1), 2, 4.21–26.

³⁸ "Dictus autem cursor... maxime in studio generali qui sequenti anno in eodem conventu magistri studencium fungatur officio." *ACG* (note 1), 2, 72.17–19.

It was only after a study and teaching experience spanning a minimum of eight to nine years that a student, destined to become a fully responsible teacher *legens ordinarie*, was sent to a *studium generale*. Already in the 1259 Order of Studies it had been demanded that a *baccalaureus* should assist the lector where there was a scholastic *studium* with a qualified lector and disputations.³⁹ As this proved to be unworkable everywhere, the general chapter in 1265 ordered the appointment of *baccaulaurei* in the *studia generalia*, who had to teach the *Sentences cursorie*.⁴⁰ Although, as we have seen, there was a *lectio cursoria* of the Bible for the different stages of Dominican studies⁴¹ at no place do we find *baccalaurei biblici* or *cursores biblici* mentioned in the sources. Even at the University of Paris, Dominicans serving as *baccalaurei* under one of the two Dominican masters only read the *Sentences*.⁴² In the regulations of teaching requirements established by the general chapter of 1305, there is nothing about a time which a friar would have needed to act as *baccalaureus* in order to become a *lector principalis* of a theological *studium*. Even if this was not mandatory, many friars would have served as *baccalaurei* for some time, at least one year.⁴³ Each province could send two students to the *studia generalia* in other provinces;⁴⁴ the number of students in their own province was limited to 22 to 23 in 1315 only.⁴⁵ Provinces could send three students each to Paris.⁴⁶

³⁹ "Provideatur quod quilibet lector tenens aliquod sollempne studium habeat bachelarium qui legat sub eo." *ACG* (note 1), 1, 100.20ff. The term *sollempne studium* means the full scholastic structure of a school, including disputations. Boyle: Notes (note 22), passim, Senner, *Johannes* (note 2), 1, 100.

⁴⁰ "In conventibus ubi sunt studia generalia ad legendum cursorie sentencias singulis annis, frater aliquis ydoneus assignetur." *ACG* (note 1), 1, 129.28ff. *Cursorie* means, as in teaching the Bible, *for a rapid overview*; see Above note 24.

⁴¹ See above, note 24; see Mulchahey (note 1), 380ff.

⁴² Mulchahey (note 1), 380ff.

⁴³ Mulchahey (note 1), 381, concludes from an admonition of the 1314 general chapter that Dominicans generally read the *Sentences* in one year, *ACG* (note 1), 2, 72.17–20; this is valid for Dominican *studia particularia* and *generalia* and for the *lectio cursoria* only and can be safely assumed only from the time onwards when the decision was taken.

⁴⁴ *ACG* (note 1), 1, 41.17ff., this has to be understood not that every year two new students could be sent, but that the province would have two of its students there. A limitation to one *studens generalis* for each study (except Paris) abroad was decided in 1303 for the provinces "Hispanie, Tolosane, Polonie, Graecie, Terre sancte, Aragonie, Bohemie, Provincie" (the eastern part of the former *Provinciva Provinciae*, the Western part now being called *Tolosana*): *ACG* (note 1), 1, 318.20–24). This immediately was extended to the new provinces *Lombardia superior* (319.15–19) and Saxonia (l. 36ff.).

⁴⁵ *ACG* (note 1), 2, 78.28–33.

⁴⁶ "Tres fratres tantum mittantur ad studium Parisius de provincia." *Const. ant.* (note 5) d. 2, c. 28: 362.25ff. A limitation to two students for the aforementioned provinces (see

When in the 1240s the theological faculty at the University of Paris became increasingly unable to accommodate the growing number of Dominican students that were to be qualified as lectors, the general chapters initiated in 1246 the creation of *studia generalia* in four additional provinces: Provincia (Southern France), Lombardia, Teutonia, and Anglia.⁴⁷ This was approved a year later and confirmed in 1248.⁴⁸ The exact place of those was not fixed; only in 1303 did the general chapter fix the place of some but not all *studia generalia*: Bologna, Cologne, Barcelona, and Montpellier.⁴⁹ From 1270 onwards there were efforts to found more *studia*, first in Hispania and Romana,⁵⁰ which led to the installation of *studia generalia* in the Roman province (first located in Naples), and in 1293 in the Spanish province.⁵¹ With this we are already beyond the maximum period that we may assume for Meister Eckhart's studies in such a context.

We can only indirectly reconstruct the curriculum of the Dominican *studia generalia* between the 1280s and the early 1290s of the 13th century. In the constitutions we find only four years of theology as a minimum requirement for a public doctor.⁵² Although it is not unlikely that the curriculum of the University of Paris would have been a model for it, we have no precise indication about the place and importance given to the elements mentioned already: cursory readings of the Bible and the *Sentences*—probably by one and the same *cursor/baccalaureus*, the *lectio principalis* given, and solemn disputations presided by the *lector*

note 44) was introduced in 1303 as well (ACG, note 1, 1, 318.15–19 and 318.10–14 and l. 34ff.).

⁴⁷ ACG (note 1), 1, 34.1–35.3; for the foundation, organization, and development of the Dominican *studia generalia* see: Walter Senner, "Gli 'Studia generalia' nell'Ordine dei Predicatori nel duecento," *Archivum Franciscanum historicum* 98 (2005), 153–75.

⁴⁸ ACG (note 1), 2, 41.13–18.

⁴⁹ ACG (note 1), 1, 325.3ff.; Mulchahey (note 1), 373, although quoting this text (376) thinks the places were fixed from the beginning. Isnard Frank, *Hausstudium* (note 14), 44, note 24, notes that in principle the places may have changed. For Cologne this can be proven only for 1347–51 when the friars were exiled: see Marianne Gechter, "Die Auseinandersetzungen um den Grund- und Rentenbesitz der Dominikaner im 14. Jahrhundert," Walter Senner: *Blühende Gelehrsamkeit: eine Ausstellung zur Gründung des Generalstudiums der Dominikaner in Köln vor 750 Jahren* (Köln: 1998), 34–39. Senner, *Johannes* (note 2), 1, 127ff.

⁵⁰ ACG (note 1), 1, 153.16–19.

⁵¹ On this development and its setbacks until 1304 (a *studium generale* was conceded to every province with the exception of the small ones Dacia, Grecia, and Terra Sancta), see Senner: "Gli Studia generalia" (note 47), 166–69.

⁵² "Nullus fiat publicus doctor, nisi per quatuor annos ad minimum theologiam audierit." *Const. ant.* (note 5), d. 2, c. 30. See Simon Tugwell, "The evolution of Dominican structures of government," 3. "The early development in the 2nd distinction of the Constitutions," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 71 (2001), 5–182, see 131ff.

principalis, internal disputations and repetitions organized by the *magister studentium*.⁵³ The 1305 general chapter fixed the minimum time for “hearing the Sentences” at a *studium generale* as preparation for practicing as *lector principalis* to two years.⁵⁴ The comparable course of studies for the Franciscans was, following the general constitutions of 1285, that they could be sent to the Parisian *studium generale* after two or three years in a provincial *studium*, or even before if they already had a good formation,⁵⁵ and that they would remain there for at least four years until they would be employed as lectors.⁵⁶ Ideally, a Dominican *lector principalis* of theology would have frequented the Parisian *studium generale*; otherwise he should have teaching experience in his own province.⁵⁷ Students returning from another *studium generale* would have to serve (as *baccalaureus*?) in their own province so that their capacity could be better appraised and that they could help to strengthen it.⁵⁸

The best theological formation which the order could give a student—and which existed in the occident—was to study and to graduate at one of the two chairs (one for members of the Francia province, one for the other Provinces) at the University of Paris. About the rules and the curriculum there, we are relatively well informed by Palémon Glorieux⁵⁹—a remaining difficulty being that we have statutes of the Faculty of Theology

⁵³ Senner, “Gli ‘Studia generalia’” (note 47), 170–73; Mulchahey (note 1), 378–84.

⁵⁴ “Nullus exponatur ad legendum ordinarie, nisi prius in aliquo particulari studio sententias audierit duobus annis, et duobus ad minus in aliquo studio generali, si in sua provincia fuerit. . . .” *ACG* (note 1), 2, 12.15–17. In two manuscripts (Rome, Archivum Generale OP, Cod. A1 and Frankfurt, Universitäts- und Stadtbibliothek, Hs. Pred. 86), there is a notable addition: “Postquam vero sententias legerit, reponatur adhuc per unum annum in <studio generali>” loc. cit., apparatus, saying that a first practice should be followed by a final year of study and audited teaching. By “audire sententias” the study of theology is referred to, see Senner, *Johannes* (note 2), 117.

⁵⁵ “Constitutiones generales antiques (Mediolanenses),” ed. Cesare Cenci in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 98 (2005), 509–70, see 528, no. 12.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 529, no. 13.

⁵⁷ “In studiis vero sententiarum nullus principalis lector ponatur, nisi de studio Parisini redierit, vel lectionem principalem, vel sententias in provincia sua laudabiliter legerit” *ACG* (note 1), 1, 12.24–26.

⁵⁸ “nullus rediens de aliquo studio generali, Parisiensi dumtaxat excepto, illo anno ponatur lector principalis, nisi prius reponatur per annum in studio generali, si in sua provincia fuerit, ut ex hoc de studencium profectu certior noticia possit haberi, et per eos magis studium sue provincie vigorari” *ACG* (note 1), 2, 12.19–23. The difference to the variant text quoted in note 52 is that this here would concern only those who had been in other provinces.

⁵⁹ Palémon Glorieux, “L’enseignement au moyen âge: techniques et méthodes en usage à la Faculté de Théologie de Paris au XIII^e siècle,” *Archives d’histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 43 (1968), 65–186.

only between 1335 and 1366.⁶⁰ Yet, even if they would rather describe what has been in use for a long time already than introduce completely new regulations, assumptions about the rules valid towards end of the 13th century have to be inferred. Here only the information relevant in the context of Meister Eckhart's Parisian residence will be given. Coming to qualify for the *magisterium*, Dominicans were exempted from teaching as masters of arts as well as from lecturing the Bible cursorily.⁶¹ They had to lecture on the *Sentences*⁶² and to answer at least five times in disputations as *baccalaureus formatus*.⁶³ Regarding the duration of the *Sentences* course I could not come to a secure conclusion: Chenu says two years,⁶⁴ Glorieux, one year,⁶⁵ and Mulchahey, "two years, the Dominicans were in the habit of doing <it> in one year. By the 14th century the University of Paris had followed the friar's lead and reduced the mandatory length of time a bachelor lectured on the *Sentences* from two years to one."⁶⁶ The 1252 document is not explicit on this question,⁶⁷ and according to the statutes from or after 1335 the course had to take place in one academic

⁶⁰ *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, ed. Henricus S. Denifle (from here on: *CUP*) no. 1192: vol. 2 (Paris: 1891); no. 1188: 2, no. 1188, 591–695; concerning how to read them, see Glorieux, "L'enseignement" (note 59), 79–81.

⁶¹ Mulchahey (note 1), 382.

⁶² "L'enseignement" (note 59), 11–18. This general obligation is in the statutes for promotion to the *magisterium* of the Faculty of Theology from 1252: *CUP* (note 60), 1, Paris 1889, no. 200, 226ff. As Marie-Dominique Chenu, "Maîtres et bacheliers de l'Université de Paris vers 1240: description du manuscrit Paris, BN lat. 15652," *Études d'histoire littéraire et doctrinale du XIII^e siècle*, vol. 1, (Publications de l'Institut d'études médiévales d'Ottawa) 1 (Paris: 1932), 11–39, esp. 25ff., has shown already, this was the sanctioning of an existing habit rather than a completely new rule.

⁶³ "L'enseignement" (note 59), 81, note 18 and 125ff. In 1252 this obligation was not mentioned, but it was in use already towards the end of the 1250s.

⁶⁴ "Maîtres et bacheliers" (note 62), 26. He bases himself on Charles Thurot, *De l'organisation de l'enseignement dans l'Université de Paris au moyen âge* (Paris: 1850), 65–67, where no primary source for this opinion is given.

⁶⁵ "L'enseignement" (note 59), 117 without source indication, Glorieux evidently bases himself on the post-1335 statutes, see below, note 68.

⁶⁶ Mulchahey (note 1), 381. She relies on Gordon Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities in the 13th and 14th Centuries: an Institutional and Intellectual History*, (New dimensions in history) (New York: 1968), 167, who in turn refers to Andrew G. Little and Franz Pelster, *Oxford Theology and Theologians Circa A.D. 1282–1302*, (Oxford Historical Society publications) 96 (Oxford: 1934), 31–56, where this, however, is not explicitly said. For the Dominican usage Mulchahey quotes the general chapter 1314: "cursor teneatur sentencias integraliter legere infra annum." *ACG* (note 1), 2, 72.17ff. It has to be observed that the chapter made an *ordinatio* just because this most likely would not always and everywhere have been observed hitherto and that the regulation of qualification at the Parisian Faculty of Theology was not within the competence of the order.

⁶⁷ "Bachelarius... saltem aliquos libros theologie glosatos et Sententias in scolis alicujus magistri actu regentis diligenter legendo." *CUP* (note 60) no. 200, 1, 226.

year between 10 October and 28 June—lectures omitted because of illness or other causes (feasts) had to be recouped after that latter date.⁶⁸ Mostly the general chapter committed the assignation of masters and bachelors to the master of the order,⁶⁹ but from 1311 onwards the general chapters often assigned the bachelors *ad legendum Sententias* themselves, whereas they left the choice of the *magister regens* to the master of the order. The practice of rotating every second year a Dominican friar from the province of France and a friar of another province to lecture on the *Sentences* in one of the two Dominican chairs at the University of Paris⁷⁰ may have two different explanations:

1. During the time in question the course of the *Sentences* still lasted two years—for the Dominicans as well as for the others.
2. After reading the *Sentences* during one academic year the *baccalau-rei* were still occupied for at least another year with fulfilling their other duties: responding in disputations, collations, and sermons. For the time from c. 1335 onwards this is supported by the statutes of the faculty, where even four years of participation in the activities of the faculty after lecturing on the *Sentences* are demanded before a *baccalaureus* may be graduated to be a *magister*.⁷¹

On the basis of the information at my disposal I will not state a definitive opinion even though I am more inclined to accept the second alternative.

Before he began the series of lectures on the *Sentences* a *baccalaureus Sententiarum* had to give a *principium* (i.e. a solemn introductory lecture),

⁶⁸ “bachalarii in theologia, qui incipiunt legere Sententias in crastino sancti Dionysii, tenentur finire in festo apostolorum Petri et Pauli. Tamen si contingeret illos infirmari infra predicta festa Dionysii et apostolorum, vel propter aliam causam . . . tunc tenerentur tot lectiones legere post predictum festum apostolorum, quot dimiserunt infra predicta festa Dionysii et apostolorum.” *CUP* (note 60) no. 1188, § 12, 2, 692.

⁶⁹ “Committimus magistro ordinis ordinacionem <studii> Parisiensis et aliorum studiorum generalium ut ipse de magistris et bacallariis ordinet et disponat” (with slight variations follows: “prout utilitati ordinis et profectui viderit expedire”). This is the stereotypical formulation which we find e.g. in the years 1291–94 and 1300–02 when Eckhart’s assignation would have occurred. *ACG* (note 1), 1, 260.5–7; 267.24–26; 271.10–12; 277.4–6; 299.3–5; 310.19–21; 316.27–29.

⁷⁰ Mulchahey (note 1), 382.

⁷¹ “bachalarii qui legerunt Sententias, debent postea proseguire facta facultatis per quatuor annos antequam licentientur, scilicet predicando, argumentando, respondendo; quod verum est nisi papa per bullas, vel facultas super hoc faceret eis gratiam.” *CUP* (note 60), no. 1188, § 13; 2, 692.

choosing a quotation from the Bible as a general theme and explaining how the four books—later on each of them had to be covered by a separate *principium*—correspond to this biblical motto.⁷²

The promotion to the *magisterium* consisted of various academic acts, described in detail by Palémon Glorieux.⁷³ In contrast to the *principium* of the *baccalaureus Sententiaris*, there was no limited period when this had to happen. The duties of the *magister regens* were to lecture, to preside and to determine disputations, and to preach. The theme of the *lectio magistralis* at the University of Paris was always a book of the Bible, which was explained in depth during an academic year; this also was called an *expositio*.⁷⁴ Preserved Bible commentaries—especially by Dominicans—are not necessarily an *expositio* in this precise sense, as *legere Bibliam biblice* was also done in other less prestigious studia.⁷⁵ The *disputatio* was the most difficult among the tasks of a *magister* and the one held in the greatest esteem. The statutes are not very explicit about it, stating only that other masters and bachelors could not lecture that day.⁷⁶ Glorieux explains that the whole faculty was expected to be present as well at the *disputatio ordinaria*, whose theme was fixed by the presiding master, as well as at the *disputatio de quolibet* (or *quodlibetalis*), where the audience could bring in their questions.⁷⁷ In a first meeting, the *discussio*, all present could bring in arguments while the *baccalaureus formatus* had to give

⁷² “bachalarii qui debent legere Sententias, et illi qui habent legere Bibliam in quatuor Ordinibus Mendicantium, debent facere principia sua infra festum Exaltationis S. Crucis et festum b. Dionysii.” *CUP* (note 60), no. 1188, § 9: 2, 692. In this statute after 1335 the *principia* are presupposed, their date is regulated as between 14 September and 9 October; see Glorieux (note 59), 138–41.

⁷³ Glorieux (note 59), 141–47.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 109–11.

⁷⁵ See above.

⁷⁶ “quando unus magister in theologia debet disputare, tunc ipse solus legit ut in pluribus, et illa die non legunt alii magistri, nec etiam bachalarii legentes Sententias et Bibliam”. *CUP* (note 60), no. 1188, § 8: 2, 692; see Glorieux (note 59), 123–27. On disputations in the Faculty of Theology, see Bernardo Bazàn, “Les questions disputées, principalement dans les facultés de théologie,” in Bazàn, *Les questions disputées et les questions quodlibétiques dans les facultés de théologie, de droit et de médecine*, (Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental) 44–45 (Turnhout: 1985), 15–149, on the *Disputationes ordinariae* see 50–85.

⁷⁷ (note 59), 125–27. Glorieux states that no frequency was prescribed for the *disputationes ordinariae* (see Glorieux, 127), the wording of the statutes (note 77) shows it was nevertheless an obligation. Bazàn even poses the question not as “how often has a master to hold a disputation,” but “how often can he” (note 77, 70ff. and 76). Not all masters, however, dared to offer the *Quodlibeta* (*ibid.*, 128ff.). On this genre see John W. Wippel “Quodlibetal questions, chiefly in theology faculties,” Bazàn, *Les questions* (note 77), 153–222, esp. 171ff.

provisional responses to them. In a second meeting, the *determinatio*, the *magister* gave his solution of the question as well as the definitive answers to the arguments forwarded in the first meeting.⁷⁸ The written reports of such disputations handed down to us vary considerably: from a detailed account, including sometimes even names of those who stated the different arguments, to a summary of the solution by the master.⁷⁹ It was also the master's task to preach for the university together with the bachelors: on Sunday, usually in the Dominican church of "Saint-Jacques," and on the numerous feasts of the university calendar either in the Franciscan church "Les Cordeliers," or another church, indicated in the calendar as well as on special occasions—in the morning at mass and in the afternoon (this latter sermon often called *collatio*).⁸⁰ About this elite formation for the most gifted friars we may not forget that all friars, even after the completion of their studies for priesthood—the prior included⁸¹—were obliged to participate in at least a *lectio ordinaria*⁸² and in disputations.⁸³ So a lifelong learning was assured.

⁷⁸ Glorieux (note 59), 125ff.; Bazàn (note 77), 58–70; Wippel (note 78), 158–71.

⁷⁹ Bazàn (note 77), 126–36; Wippel (note 78), 187–92.

⁸⁰ "quando theologi habent aliquod festum, quo ipsi non legunt, licet in illo festo legatur in aliis facultatibus, nichilominus in illa die fit sermo de mane, et collatio in vespere in Cordigeris, vel in Jacobitis." *CUP* (note 60), no. 1188, § 4: 2, 692. The calendar: *CUP* (note 60) no. 1192: 2, 709–16; Glorieux (note 59), 148–57. On the transmission see Beverly M. Kienzle, "Introduction," *The Sermon*, ed. B.M. Kienzle (Turnhout: 2000), 143–74, esp. 159–61; Nicole Bériou, "Les sermons latins après 1200," 363–445, esp. 399–404. On the importance for the history of the university see Louis J. Bataillon, "Les crises de l'Université de Paris d'après les sermons universitaires," *Die Auseinandersetzungen an der Pariser Universität im XIII. Jahrhundert*, ed. Albert Zimmermann, *Miscellanea mediaevalia* 10, (Berlin: 1976), 155–69. David L. D'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris Before 1300* (Oxford: 1985), 136–40 points to the importance of sermons by Paris mendicants as models for the friars' preaching.

⁸¹ "Quod priores vadant ad scholas sicut ceteri fratres, quando commode potuerunt." Valenciennes 1259, *ACG* (note 1), 1, 99.32ff.; see Boyle: Notes (note 22), 250.

⁸² "illi vero qui de theologia aliquid audierunt, ad minus audiant unam ordinariam lectionem." Oxford 1280, *ACG* (note 1), 1, 208.32ff. "Communes autem fratres singulis diebus ad scholas veniant et ibi lectiones audiant, alias illa die a vino vel a pitancia sine dispensacione abstinent, si eos sine causa racionabili et licencia speciali prioris vel eius vicarii deesse contingat." Genova 1305, *ACG* (note 1), 2, 13.14–18.

⁸³ "Quod lectores vacantes vadant ad scholas, precipue ad disputacionem." Valenciennes 1259, *ACG* (note 1), 1, 99.34ff.

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